

THE
INFERNO

OF
DANTE

A NEW VERSE TRANSLATION BY


ROBERT PINSKY

BILINGUAL EDITION

"A BRILLIANT NEW

TRANSLATION"

—*Newsweek*



**THE
INFERNO
OF
DANTE**

ROBERT PINSKY

ALSO BY ROBERT PINSKY

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THE INFERNO OF DANTE

A NEW VERSE TRANSLATION BY
ROBERT PINSKY

WITH NOTES BY NICOLE PINSKY

FOREWORD BY JOHN FRECCERO

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R. P.

For Frank Bidart

INTERED

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FOREWORD

In spite of Dante's reputation as the greatest of Christian poets, there is no sign of Christian forgiveness in the *Inferno*. The dominant theme is not mercy but justice, dispensed with the severity of the ancient law of retribution. The moral system of Hell owes more to ancient philosophy than it does to medieval classifications of virtues and vices, while the landscape of the underworld derives from Virgil more than from the poetically impoverished visions of the Middle Ages. The punishments themselves are reminiscent of ancient mythology, or perhaps even of the Marquis de Sade, but certainly not of the Gospels. Christ is never directly mentioned, we are told that pity should be extinguished here, and perhaps worst of all, the pain and despair of the damned seem to separate them from the rest of humanity and from one another, leaving them radically alone in the midst of an infernal crowd.

A city, according to St. Augustine, is a group of people joined together by their love of the same object. Ultimately, however, there can be only two objects of human love: God or the self. All other loves are masks for these. It follows that there are only two cities: the City of God, where all love Him to the exclusion of self, and the City of Man, where self-interest makes every sinner an enemy to every other. The bonds of charity form a community of the faithful, while sin disperses them and leaves only a crowd. In Dante's poem, Hell is the parody of a city, point zero in the scale of cosmic love. Like Augustine's City of Man, it is meant to represent the social consequences of insatiable desire when it remains earthbound.

The City of God and the City of Man were thought to be spiritual states, the antithetical allegiances of those who actually live together in the real city. At the Last Judgment, sinners and saints would be definitively separated and sent to their respective cities, Heaven or Hell. The earthly city was therefore an encampment in which saints and sinners met and mingled as pilgrims en route to opposite destinations. Once they arrived at their respective goals, however, the damned were forever separated from the blessed.

Dante's *Inferno* is a vision of the City of Man in the afterlife, which is why it contains no glimmer of forgiveness. At the same time, it may also be thought of as a radical representation of the world in which we live, stripped of all temporizing and all hope. Hell is the state of the soul after death, but it is also the state of the world as seen by an exile whose experience has taught him no longer to trust the world's values. The ruined portals and fallen bridges of Hell are emblems of the failure of all bonds among the souls who might once have been members of the human community.

The sense in which Hell stands for the real world has never been lost on Dante's readers. What medieval readers would have referred to as the moral allegory reappears in contemporary interpretations by authors as diverse as Albert Camus (*The Fall*), where the infernal city is Amsterdam, and LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), whose nightmare in the Newark ghetto is entitled *The System of Dante's Hell*.

The principal dramatic contrast in the poem is between the pilgrim and his guide on one hand, who are journeying through Hell, and, on the other, the souls they encounter, who are imprisoned there forever. The progress of the poem is measured by the journey, while the episodic encounters provide the substance of what Dante has to tell us about his life and times. Because of the contrast between the perspective of the pilgrim, who looks forward to his salvation, and the perspective of the damned, who have no future, conversation in Hell is charged with irony. Much of what the sinners have to say about their lives or their actions is undermined by their guilt or self-delusion. Their testimony is self-serving, as one would expect of any prisoner's account of his or her conviction, except that here, as we learn from the inscription on the gates, all have received the same sentence, with no hope of appeal, and none has been framed. Justice in Hell is meant to be objective, measured out by a bureaucratic monster in proportion to the specific gravity of the sin. Such a mechanical administration of punishment leaves no room for judicial error or caprice.

Few of Dante's readers have derived much satisfaction from the triumph of this somewhat anonymous justice. Like Dante's protagonist, we find ourselves moved by the souls in Hell despite the moral system that condemns them so pitilessly. Where divine justice sees only black or white, we find mitigating circumstances. If Francesca is an adulteress, she is also a victim of literary seduction. Brunetto is a sodomite, but he is also a father figure who taught the poet how to make himself eternal. Ulysses is a thief, yet he pronounces an oration on the dignity of man. The irony in these portraits derives from the fact that the prodigious historicity of Dante's characters, their individuality, seems to matter not at all in the way they are classified. In the either/or of the afterlife, distinctions are obliterated and the soul's place in Hell is determined dispassionately, by the flick of a monster's tail.

For a modern interpreter, the easiest way to deal with irony such as this is to ignore it, to assume that the abstract moral system is irrelevant to a discussion of the great figures of the *Inferno*. Such an approach goes back to Coleridge, who proposed that we "suspend disbelief" in order to appreciate the power of Dante's poetry without endorsing the religious conviction that it claims as its inspiration. In this century, Benedetto Croce suggested that since we are no longer concerned in the modern world with medieval theology, we may safely ignore it and consider only the work's lyrical passages. The preference for "feeling" over "meaning" in poetry was later to

reappear in the work of Erich Auerbach, who maintained that we should separate Dante's didactic intent from his power of representation. In his masterful reading of Canto X in his book *Mimesis*, he conceded that Dante intended to give his characters an allegorical meaning, but claimed that the power and the historicity of his characterizations were so great as to overwhelm whatever doctrinal meaning they were meant to convey. Over the centuries, according to Auerbach, the sheer force of Dante's verses gradually came to subvert his moralizing intention, transforming a medieval system of punishments and rewards into an autonomous, secular world, much like this one, in which thoroughly human characters no longer *signify* anything, as Dante may have wished, but simply *are* in all of their tragic humanity.

A reading such as this runs the risk of ignoring something essential about the poem. The clash between the humanity of the damned and the implacable judgment to which they are subjected is not simply an accident of history, the abyss that separates medieval standards of morality from our own, but rather reflects a fundamental division in Dante's own consciousness. Irony in the *Inferno* arises from the discrepancy between the perspective of the pilgrim, which is much like ours, and that of the poet, who, by journey's end, claims to share God's view. The distance that separates the traveler's naïveté from the omniscience of the poet is the poem's story: the transformation of the pilgrim into the poet, whose work we read.

By ignoring this irony, Auerbach was able to claim that Dante's realism had created an autonomous world, in which judgment seems no longer relevant. His dismissal of medieval moralizing is understandable. We are moved by the sympathetic portrayal of the damned, but often so repelled by their sadistic punishment that we would prefer to accept the fiction, pretending that God, rather than the author, determined those punishments. It is almost easier to imagine that Dante actually saw Brunetto among the sodomites in Hell—" 'Are you here, Ser Brunetto?' " (*Inf.*, XV, 26)—than to conceive of his using such affectionate and deferential language with someone whose reputation he was about to besmirch forever. Apart from Dante's text, we know nothing whatever of Brunetto's proclivities, so that we must choose between accepting the biting irony and accepting the realistic illusion. No pupil could so gratuitously betray his teacher, we reason; it must be that God put him there.

This tempting but simplistic reading misses the plot, which is about Dante more than it is about his characters. The reason these biting ironies are so important is that they generate the story of the descent into Hell. When Dante sees the glutton Ciacco, for example, he asks about the " 'men of good reason' " whose purpose in life was the good of the city. Ciacco answers, " 'Their souls are among the blackest in Hell' " (*Inf.*, VI, 71, 76). The gap between the pilgrim's perception of the good and the author's could not be more pointed or relevant to the story. Again, the vulnerable

and victimized Francesca is the Francesca of the pilgrim, but the adulteress justly punished is the Francesca seen by the narrator. The clash of perspectives on her, as on many of the characters in Hell, thematizes the conversion of a thoroughly human and fallible protagonist into the uncompromising narrator who tells his story. By attributing misapplied sympathy to the pilgrim while leaving condemnation for the most part to the narrator, Dante plots the descent as a penitential autobiography, a narrative of conversion in the tradition of Augustine's *Confessions*.

The exchanges with the damned serve to call into question all of the comfortable conventions that most of the time serve to mask from us our own mortality. Hell is a limit situation, like the prison camp or the cancer ward, where all illusions are stripped away and one has no choice but to acknowledge one's powerlessness. The journey is therefore an allegory of education, like Plato's Myth of the Cave, except that all of Hell must be traversed in order to reach the cave, point zero, from which Plato thought the journey began. This journey begins at a point minus one, an illusory world of inverted values, in which one lives with a false image of one's self. These illusions must be destroyed before any spiritual progress can be made. The descent into Hell is meant to be destructive, its irony corrosive, in order to clear the way for the ascent.

The descent questions and destroys Dante's earlier illusions, represented perhaps by the shadowy world of the prologue scene (*Inf.*, I). Before he was exiled from the city of Florence on a trumped-up charge of political corruption, Dante seemed to be at the summit of his career, "Midway on our life's journey," as he says in the first verse of the poem. He was a prior of the City of Florence—equivalent perhaps to alderman—and the most celebrated love poet of his city. The descent into Hell clearly stands for the torment he must have felt with his exile; before long, however, he must also have come to realize that his suffering was a necessary prelude to his spiritual transformation. This is implied by the poem's symbolic cosmology, which places Purgatory and Heaven to the South, reachable only by traveling down from our hemisphere, through the cone of Hell. Such a trajectory dramatizes Augustine's mystic injunction: "Descend, so that you may ascend."

Unlike Plato's allegories, however, Dante's journey is autobiographical. Several passages are explicitly so and serve to reinforce the sense in which the descent into Hell may be thought of as a descent into Dante's past. There is, for example, a reference to the poet's military service at the battle of Caprona (*Inf.*, XXI, 94), perhaps an allusion to his trip to Rome during the Jubilee Year in Canto XVIII, 28, and, most enigmatically, a reference in Canto XIX to an incident in which Dante says that he smashed one of the holes in the baptismal font in the Baptistery of Florence—a feat clearly impossible to accomplish with one's bare hands—in order to save someone from drowning. Whatever the significance of that incident, if indeed it ever

took place, the mystery is compounded by Dante's claim finally to have cleared it up in these verses: "let this be / My seal to clear the matter" (*Inf.*, XIX, 18–19).

The most important part of a poet's biography, however, is his poetry. The great number of autocitations in Dante's text, passages that clearly hark back to his earlier poetry, are at the same time autobiographical allusions. They, too, are subject to ironic interpretation; in a poet such as Dante, for whom style is of a sacred order, autocitation is autocritique. His entire career as poet was a preparation for the *Divine Comedy*, which recapitulates and, at the same time, radically changes all that went before. From the vantage point of the *Comedy*, each of the successive stages of Dante's poetic career was both mistaken and necessary for his development as poet, much as the sins recounted by Augustine seem retrospectively to have been both regrettable and necessary for the structure of the *Confessions*. The paradox was familiar to Christians, who thought of the sin of Adam and Eve precisely as a "fortunate fall" (*felix culpa*), inasmuch as it prepared the way for the coming of Christ.

The subject of Dante's poetry had always been Love—it continued to be Love, profoundly transformed, in the *Divine Comedy*. For Dante, as for many of his contemporaries, love and poetry were inseparable, as is suggested by the imagery of birds in flight that seems to recur each time those two subjects come together in the poem—the Italian word *penne* means both "pens" and "wings," suggesting both poetic inspiration and erotic flight. In the *Inferno*, bird imagery abounds in the canto of Francesca da Rimini (*Inf.*, V), which is perhaps Dante's most famous meditation on sinful love.

When Francesca attributes her weakness to her "gentle heart"—"Love, which in gentle hearts is quickly born" (*Inf.*, V, 89)—her words echo lines from Dante's earlier love poetry, where he claimed that "Love and the gentle heart are one." If Francesca's words are undercut by her damnation, Dante's are as well, so that she stands as a surrogate for Dante's own poetic past. Her account of her seduction by literature might be taken as a veiled confession of a similar susceptibility on Dante's part. St. Augustine confessed to the same weakness when he expressed regret for having wept bitter tears for Dido, who killed herself for love, while shedding none for himself, although he was dying a spiritual death.

By far the most important autobiographical allusion is also the most indirect, for the canto of Ulysses offers no verbal echoes of Dante's work, yet functions as an antitype of Dante's journey, an example of overreaching that is meant as the author's *memento mori*:

*I sorrowed then, and when I turn my mind
To what I saw next, sorrow again—and force*

My art to make its genius more restrained
Than is my usual bent, lest it should run
Where virtue doesn't . . .

(*Inf.*, XXVI, 20–24)

Several details suggest that the figure of Ulysses is not simply a dramatic episode in Dante's descent but is, rather, an example of what might have become of Dante had he not been rescued in the dark woods. The epic hero is alluded to twice in the *Purgatorio* and explicitly recalled in the song of the Siren (*Purg.*, XIX, 1ff.). He is mentioned for the last time in *Paradiso*, XXVII, 83, when the pilgrim looks down from the constellation of the Gemini at the "mad wake of Ulysses." No other character in the poem has such an afterlife, which suggests that his journey is meant to contrast with Dante's, representing the fate from which the poet was saved by the intervention of Virgil and three blessed ladies.

In the symbolic geography of the poem, Dante and Ulysses travel toward the same objective: the mountain of Purgatory in the southern hemisphere. On any reading, this is the mountain "Mantled in rays of that bright planet that shows / The road to everyone, whatever our journey" (*Inf.*, I, 14–15). Ulysses died a shipwreck en route, "as pleased an Other" (*Inf.*, XXVI, 134), within sight of the mountaintop, while Dante began his voyage through the earth after having survived a metaphoric shipwreck of his own: "As one still panting, ashore from dangerous seas, / Looks back at the deep he has escaped" (*Inf.*, I, 18–19). Survival and shipwreck seem equally fortuitous, or perhaps *gratuitous*, in the etymological sense, but the existence of the story depends upon the difference, "as pleased an Other."

The speech of Ulysses to his men, an oration on the dignity of man (" 'You were not born to live as a mere brute does, / But for the pursuit of knowledge and the good' " (*Inf.*, XXVI, 114–15), expresses principles that do not differ appreciably from those expressed in Dante's *Convivio*, a philosophical work begun around the time of his exile from Florence and left unfinished. There is in the *Convivio* the same philosophical self-confidence that we sense in Ulysses' speech, with its emphasis on a purely human rationality and no mention of the need for spiritual self-discipline or humility. Ulysses' fate constitutes a palinode, a retrospective retraction of the *Convivio*. Both the shipwreck of Ulysses and the metaphoric near shipwreck of the first canto represent the disaster that awaits the proud self-reliance of a philosophy unaided by faith.

Ulysses was a traditional emblem in antiquity of the soul's journey, without a guide, to its celestial home. *Nostos* was the word in Greek that described the circular course of the soul, from its home, through myriad adventures, back to its home. If Dante's Ulysses ends a shipwreck, it was not simply because he did not know Homer's text—in the Middle Ages,

every schoolboy knew that Ulysses returned home, even if no one knew the text firsthand—but, rather, because in a Christian context, any such journey, alone, was doomed to failure. The first scene of the poem, with the poet's unsuccessful attempt to scale the mountain, illustrates precisely that point. The Christian journey to the same objective was very different. It is perhaps epitomized by the journey on the back of the monster Geryon, which at the same time functions as the emblem of Dante's poetic enterprise.

The journey on Geryon is flight to the depths, with Virgil as the pilgrim's guide and protector. The imagery accompanying the description of that flight is clearly nautical. Geryon's flight is a navigation, just as Ulysses' navigation is metaphorically a flight—" 'We made wings of our oars, in an insane / Flight' " (*Inf.*, XXVI, 120–21). An additional symmetry is established by the fact that the flight on Geryon produces fear in the pilgrim when he remembers contrary examples—Phaëthon and Icarus—just as the disastrous flight of Ulysses evokes the contrary example of the flight of Elijah's chariot. Geryon is obviously Dante's answer to antiquity's Ulysses.

There is a further detail that distinguishes Geryon from all the metaphoric vehicles of spiritual progress to be found in the philosophical tradition: the feet of the soul, the chariot, the ship, and the soul's wings. Dante's monster embodies a confessional paradox, inasmuch as it is an evil—"fraud's foul emblem" (*Inf.*, XVII, 6)—which nevertheless can be employed for the soul's salvation, provided one trust in Providence and abandon one's self-reliance, represented by the rope girdle that the pilgrim tosses into the abyss. The surliness of the monster before and during the flight, in contrast to its departure when its mission is accomplished, "like an arrow from the string" (*Inf.*, XVII, 127), suggests the deliberate harnessing of evil in order to favor the soul's progress. Geryon seems forced to collaborate in Hell's "command performance" for the pilgrim's visit, only to snap back into place, like the giant later on, when the pilgrim has passed. This, we have suggested, is the mechanism that characterizes Christian confession.

After the final vision of the *Paradiso*, the pilgrim becomes the poet who has been with us from the beginning. In one sense, then, the story of the poem is how the pilgrim got there, that is, how the story came to be written. Throughout the poem, references to the progress of the journey, particularly when there are images of flight or navigation, refer equally well to the progress of the poem. So it is with the monster Geryon, which is an emblem not only of the confessional theme but also of Dante's poetry. Dante's arch address to the reader, "I vow / By my *Commedia's* lines," suggests that he takes great pride in this poetic tour de force, whose fictionality he scarcely bothers to conceal.

The flight on the back of the monster is different from other metaphoric flights to the absolute because of the presence of a guide—the ancient Neoplatonist Plotinus had specified that on the mind's journey to the One,

no guide was necessary. In the first canto of the *Inferno*, the abortive attempt to scale the mountain seems very much an attempt to reach enlightenment—the sun shining on the mountaintop—in a way that the Neoplatonists thought was possible: without a guide. If this were all there were to the journey to God, the climb would have succeeded and the poem could have ended with that upward glance (I, 12). For Christians, however, intellectual enlightenment is not the same as virtue. Virtue requires an act of the *will*, so that one may *do* what the reason tells us is the good. The three beasts that block the way are the beasts within us, dispositions toward sin that we cannot exorcise without supernatural help. The descent into Hell under Virgil's guidance is directed toward surmounting those obstacles, and the *Purgatorio* tells the story of the successful climb.

The guidance of Virgil is the guidance of his text. The encounter with the Roman shade stands for an encounter with the *Aeneid*. Readers sometimes wonder why, if Aristotle is referred to in Limbo as “Master of those who know” (*Inf.*, IV, 116), Dante should have chosen Virgil as his guide rather than the Greek philosopher. For one thing, Virgil was the poet of Empire, of that universal monarchy for which Dante felt such great nostalgia. In order to celebrate the Empire, Virgil had his hero Aeneas descend into the underworld in order to find his father and to receive from him prophecies regarding Rome's future glories. Dante borrowed several details from Aeneas' descent and suggested in the *Inferno* that Virgil had been to Hell before.

Another reason for choosing Virgil was that he had written the *Fourth Eclogue* to celebrate the birth of a child to a Roman official. The eclogue had an enormous success and was universally believed in the Middle Ages to have been Messianic, predicting the coming of Christ. Perhaps most important of all, however, was the sense in which Dante believed he could supplant Roman tragedy with his “Comedy” and transform Virgilian pathos into Christian joy.

Triumphalist translations of the *Aeneid* into English have obscured for us the extent to which Virgil is the poet of loss, a poet for whom death seemed stronger than Aeneas' love for Dido, stronger than the eternity of Rome, stronger even than poetry, as revealed by the death of Orpheus. According to some of the early Church fathers, Christ was a new Orpheus, descending and this time succeeding in bringing back his beloved, the human soul, from the Underworld. Dante may well have thought of himself, if not as a new Orpheus, then as a new Virgil, returning for his love and finding her beyond death in the Earthly Paradise. The search for Beatrice and her return are the story of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, where Virgil cannot discern clearly, or at all. For the moment, which is to say for the *Inferno*, Virgil remains expert on the much more familiar terrain that the pilgrim must traverse.

Finally, a word should be said about the style in which the poem is written. Dante called it the "Comedy" (the adjective "divine" was added in the sixteenth century), by which he meant not only that it had a happy ending, but also that it was written in a humble and everyday style. In antiquity, it was important to adopt the appropriate style for different subject matter: the "high," or tragic, style for the most weighty subjects, the "low," or comic, for everyday or vulgar subjects. The Gospels were said to have changed all of this, by using humble speech—the parables, say, or the exchange between Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well—for the weightiest matter of all: our Redemption. One could say that the tragic realism with which we are familiar in our own literature, where the profoundest matters can be conveyed in dialectical and vulgar speech, was made possible by the revolution in rhetoric brought about by Christianity, which could represent salvation itself by a glass of water.

Dante wrote precisely in the humble speech of Scripture, a language he hoped everyone would understand. He was among the first in the Middle Ages to do so, writing this most serious of poems not in Latin, as one might have expected, but in the everyday speech of his city. Ultimately, this is the justification for another contemporary translation, apart from its power and extraordinary accuracy. The poem is written in a language that we speak *now*, no matter which language we speak. Robert Pinsky renews for us a Dante for our own time and does so with admirable clarity and grace.

John Freccero

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I have tried to make an *Inferno* in English that stays true to the nature of English, and that conveys the meaning of the Italian as accurately as possible, in lines of *terza rima* that will suggest some of the force and suppleness of Dante's form. Above all, I have tried to translate a poem: in passages where my English is not literal, I hope that it is faithful to the spirit.

Dante invented *terza rima* (the interlocking rhyme pattern *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc.) for the *Commedia*, and its effect—combining onward movement with a feeling of conclusiveness in each step—seems integral to the poem, something well worth trying to approximate.

It may be helpful to say a few words about rhyme:

Italian is rich in rhyme, while English—despite having a far greater number of words—is relatively poor in rhyme. Therefore, the triple rhymes of the original can put tremendous strain on an English translation. One response to this strain, one way of dealing with the torturous demands of *terza rima* in English, has been to force the large English lexicon to supply rhymes: squeezing unlikely synonyms to the ends of lines, and bending idiom ruthlessly to get them there.

This translation rejects that solution and instead makes a more flexible definition of rhyme, or of the kind and degree of like sound that constitute rhyme.

But on the other hand, I have not accepted just any similar sounds as rhyming: the translation is based on a fairly systematic rhyming norm that defines rhyme as the same consonant-sounds—however much vowels may differ—at the ends of words. For example, the opening tercets of Canto I include the triads “tell/feel/well,” “sleep/stop/up,” and “night/thought/it.”

This system of like sounds happens to correspond to some preference of my own ear, a personal taste: for me such rhymes as, say, “swans/stones” or “gibe/club” or “south/both” often sound more beautiful and interesting than such hard-rhyme combinations as “bones/stones,” “rub/club,” or “south/mouth.” This idea of harmony seems even more clear with disyllabic or “feminine” endings: “faces/houses” is more appealing than “faces/places”; “flavor/quiver” has more interest than “flavor/savor” or “giver/quiver.”

The reader who recognizes these examples I have taken from poems by Yeats, who is a master of such consonantal rhyming, might speculate that such sounds are *similar for English*: roughly as “like,” perhaps, in the context of English and its great sprawling matrix of sounds, as are “*terra/guerra*” or “*belle/stelle*” in the tighter Italian fabric.

But such speculation aside, and regardless of my own predilections, con-

sonantal or "Yeatsian" rhyme can supply an audible scaffold of English *terza rima*, a scaffold that does not distort the English sentence, or draw excessively on the reaches of the English lexicon. In this scaffolding, mere vowel rhymes—even as close as "claim/feign" or "state/raid"—have been arbitrarily excluded, as taking away some of the backbone or stringency of effect. The goal is to make enough of a formal demand to support the English sentence, but not so monstrous a demand as to buckle it, or to mangle the particularly delicate gestures English syntax and idiom make as they accomplish work another language might perform with inflected endings.

(It remains to add that by extension words which end in vowels can be rhymed by a consistent system in which round vowels rhyme with one another—"now/throw," or "clue/saw"; as can closed vowels—"be/why" or "stay/cloy"; and, that disyllabic rhyme so sticks out in English that it can acceptably be made a step more approximate, as in "bitter/enter/blunder"—perhaps it *must* be made more approximate, in order to avoid the comic feeling of limerick, or of W. S. Gilbert.)

This is a brief outline of the general principles behind a work which in practice, as the reader will see, does not apply them without occasional compromises and slidings. As to hard rhymes, there are many, but as I worked I often found myself revising them out, or striving to make them the first and third members of a triad, rather than adjacent, to keep them from leaping out of a pattern I have labored to make expressive in its variations.

Though we call it a form, verse is physical, and in this sense the sounds of a poem are its body. By devising *terza rima* as the body for a poem about the fates of souls and bodies, Dante added an expressive element as well as a kind of movement. His variations in tone and idiom—from direct to elaborately rhetorical, for example, or from high to low—have an emotional truth that moves in counterpoint with the current of interlocking rhymes.

In Canto XII, when Virgil and Dante come down a rocky slope and approach the chief centaur Chiron, wise teacher of heroes, Chiron makes an interesting observation to his followers:

*As we came close,
Chiron drew an arrow's notch back through the tangle*

*Of beard along his jaw to clear a space
For his large mouth, and to the others he said:
"Have you observed how that one's steps displace*

*Objects his body touches? Feet of the dead
Are not accustomed to behave like that."*

Dante displaces the physical stones of the infernal world, though shades like Virgil who dwell there do not. And yet, in an apparent contradiction, Virgil sometimes carries the body of Dante about, as in Canto XXIII:

*My leader took me up at once, and did
As would a mother awakened by a noise
Who sees the flames around her, and takes her child,*

*Concerned for him more than herself, and flies
Not staying even to put on a shift:
Supine he gave himself to the rocky place*

*Where the hard bank slopes downward to the cleft,
Forming one side of the adjacent pouch.
No water coursing a sluice was ever as swift*

*To turn a landmill's wheel on its approach
Toward the vanes, as my master when he passed
On down that bank that slanted to the ditch,*

*Hurling along with me upon his breast
Not like his mere companion, but like his child.*

I suggest that this is not simply an inconsistency, but another indication that the relation between the two poets, living and dead, Christian and pagan, one of them still embarked on his venture, the other having completed his, is a relation between worlds: a point of intersection within a dense web of moral and physical realities.

Embodiment, in some such sense, is the *Inferno's* action, and its meaning, and its method. The prosodic embodiment Dante invented for his poem is characterized by tremendous forward movement, a movement that, in English, the prose translations have sometimes rendered more effectively than those in verse. To catch some of that quality, at once propulsive and epigrammatic, I have allowed myself the liberty of enjambment, at times letting the sentence run over the rhymed line ending more aggressively than in the original, and also crossing freely from tercet to tercet. This translation is not line-for-line, nor tercet-for-tercet. In order to represent Dante's succinct, compressed quality along with the flow of *terza rima*, I have often found it necessary to write fewer lines in English than he uses in Italian. The Italian line and sentence not being the same as the English line and sentence, I have hoped to imitate some of Dante's formal energy, in the body of an English equivalent. This equivalent form, rising from the flow

and arrest of the enjambed English sentences, seemed to require stanza breaks between the tercets of the translation—partly because the white space is a visual register of the consonantal *terza rima*.

To the image of Virgil skidding downhill on his back, while clasping Dante to his chest, Dante adds the simile of water coursing through a sluice to turn the regularly spaced vanes of a millwheel. This simile can serve as an image of the relation of lines and stanzas, like regular vanes, to the surging fluid of the sentence. At the same time, the motion of the embracing poets represents a related dynamism of spirit, word, and matter. This translation's arrangement of rhyme, sentence, line, and stanza attempts hopefully, sometimes perhaps desperately, to find a commensurate relation of elements—improvised and imperfect at every point but pushing on: trying to turn the wheel surely enough to accomplish what work it can.

A PLAN OF DANTE'S
JOURNEY THROUGH HELL

CANTO	LOCALE	DEMONS, ETC.
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I	Dark Woods	Three Beasts
II	Entrance	
III	Fore-Hell	Charon

Across Acheron to Limbo (1st Circle) & the Incontinent Sins (Circles 2-5)

IV	1st Circle (Limbo)	
V	2nd Circle	Minos
VI	3rd Circle	Cerberus
VII	4th Circle	Plutus
VIII	5th Circle	Phlegyas

Across Styx to the City of Dis (6th Circle)

IX-XI	6th Circle (Dis)	Furies
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Across Phlegethon to the Plain of Fire (7th Circle): The Violent Sins

XII	7th Circle, Ring 1	Minotaur
XIII	7th Circle, Ring 2	Harpies
XIV	7th Circle, Ring 3	
XV-XVI	7th Circle, Ring 3	
XVII	7th Circle, Ring 3	

Carried by Geryon to Malebolge (8th Circle): Sins of Fraud

XVIII	Pouch 1	The Malebranche
"	Pouch 2	"
XIX	Pouch 3	"
XX	Pouch 4	"
XXI-XXII	Pouch 5	"
XXIII	Pouch 6	"
XXIV-XXV	Pouch 7	"
XXVI-XXVII	Pouch 8	"
XXVIII	Pouch 9	"
XXIX-XXX	Pouch 10	"

Lowered by Antaeus to the Pit (9th Circle): Sins of Betrayal

XXXI-XXXIV	The Pit of Hell:	Giants
	Caina	Lucifer
	Antenora	"
	Ptolomea	"
	Judecca	"

CANTO

CLASS OF SOULS

SPECIFIC SOULS

I

II

III

Neutrals

The Great Refuser

Across Acheron to Limbo (1st Circle) & the Incontinent Sins (Circles 2-5)

IV

The Unbaptized

Poets of Antiquity

V

The Lustful

Paolo & Francesca

VI

Gluttons

Ciacco

VII

Spenders & Hoarders

VIII

The Wrathful & Sullen

Filippo Argenti

Across Styx to the City of Dis (6th Circle)

IX-XI

Heretics

Epicurus, Farinata

Across Phlegethon to the Plain of Fire (7th Circle): The Violent Sins

XII

Violent toward Others

Attila, Rinieri

XIII

toward Self (Suicide)

Pier della Vigna

XIV

toward God (Blasphemy)

Capaneus

XV-XVI

toward Nature (Sodomy)

Brunetto Latini

XVII

toward Art (Usury)

Usurous Families

Carried by Geryon to Malebolge (8th Circle): Sins of Fraud

XVIII

Seducers & Panders

Caccianemico, Jason

"

Flatterers

Alessio Interminai

XIX

Simoniacs

Pope Nicholas III

XX

Diviners

Manto, Michael Scott

XXI-XXII

Barrators

The Navarrese

XXIII

Hypocrites

The Jovial Friars

XXIV-XXV

Thieves

Vanni Fucci

XXVI-XXVII

False Counselors

Ulysses

XXVIII

Schismatics

Bertran de Born

XXIX-XXX

Falsifiers

Gianni Schicchi

Lowered by Antaeus to the Pit (9th Circle): Sins of Betrayal

XXXI-XXXIV

Betrayers of:

Kin

Mordred

Country & Party

Ugolino

Guests

Friar Alberigo

Benefactors

Brutus, Judas

A MAP OF DANTE'S HELL

KEY

☒ *Dante and Virgil in Canto XI*

1 *Entrance*

2 *Tower*

3 *Gates of Dis*

4 *Encounter with Geryon*

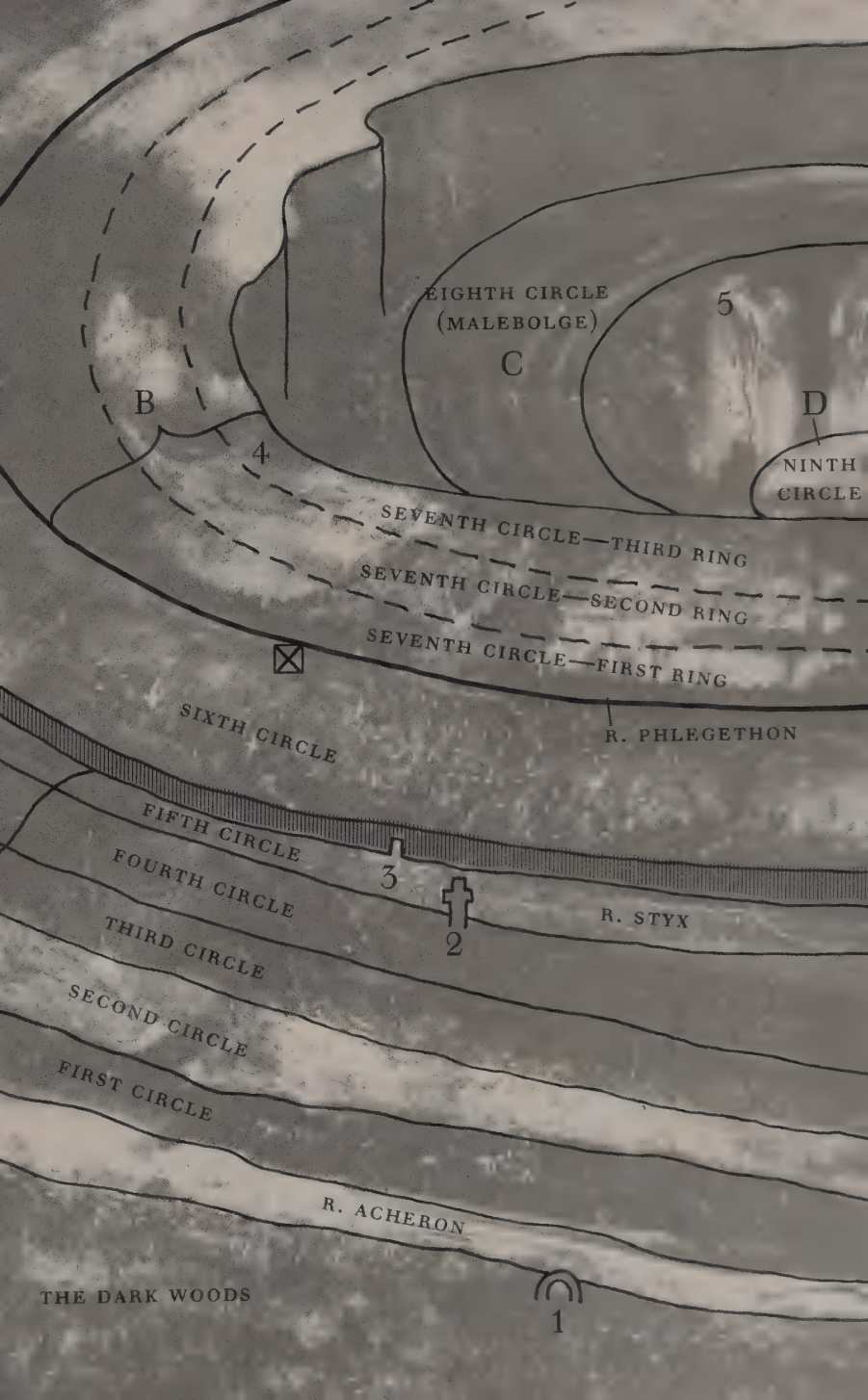
5 *Giants*

A *Sins of Incontinence*

B *Sins of Violence*

C *Sins of Fraud*

D *Sins of Betrayal*



EIGHTH CIRCLE
(MALEBOLGE)

5

B

4

D

NINTH
CIRCLE

SEVENTH CIRCLE—THIRD RING

SEVENTH CIRCLE—SECOND RING

SEVENTH CIRCLE—FIRST RING



SIXTH CIRCLE

R. PHLEGETHON

FIFTH CIRCLE

FOURTH CIRCLE

3



R. STYX

2

THIRD CIRCLE

SECOND CIRCLE

FIRST CIRCLE

R. ACHERON



1

THE DARK WOODS

THE
INFERNO
OF
DANTE

- Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
 mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
 che la diritta via era smarrita.
 Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
 esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
 che nel pensier rinova la paura!
 Tant' è amara che poco è più morte;
 ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,
 dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte.*
- 10 *Io non so ben ridir com' i' v'intrai,
 tant' era pien di sonno a quel punto
 che la verace via abbandonai.
 Ma poi ch'i' fui al piè d'un colle giunto,
 là dove terminava quella valle
 che m'avea di paura il cor compunto,
 guardai in alto e vidi le sue spalle
 vestite già de' raggi del pianeta
 che mena dritto altrui per ogne calle.*
- 20 *Allor fu la paura un poco queta,
 che nel lago del cor m'era durata
 la notte ch'i' passai con tanta pietà.
 E come quei che con lena affannata,
 uscito fuor del pelago a la riva,
 si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata,
 così l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva,
 si volse a retro a rimirar lo passo
 che non lasciò già mai persona viva.*
- 30 *Poi ch'èi posato un poco il corpo lasso,
 ripresi via per la piaggia diserta,
 sì che 'l piè fermo sempre era 'l più basso.
 Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar de l'erta,
 una lonza leggera e presta molto,
 che di pel macolato era coverta;
 e non mi si partia dinanzi al volto,
 anzi 'mpediva tanto il mio cammino,
 ch'i' fui per ritornar più volte vòlto.*
- Temp' era dal principio del mattino,
 e 'l sol montava 'n sù con quelle stelle
 ch'eran con lui quando l'amor divino*

CANTO I

Midway on our life's journey, I found myself
In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell
About those woods is hard—so tangled and rough

And savage that thinking of it now, I feel
The old fear stirring: death is hardly more bitter.
And yet, to treat the good I found there as well

I'll tell what I saw, though how I came to enter
I cannot well say, being so full of sleep
Whatever moment it was I began to blunder

10 Off the true path. But when I came to stop
Below a hill that marked one end of the valley
That had pierced my heart with terror, I looked up

Toward the crest and saw its shoulders already
Mantled in rays of that bright planet that shows
The road to everyone, whatever our journey.

Then I could feel the terror begin to ease
That churned in my heart's lake all through the night.
As one still panting, ashore from dangerous seas,

Looks back at the deep he has escaped, my thought
20 Returned, still fleeing, to regard that grim defile
That never left any alive who stayed in it.

After I had rested my weary body awhile
I started again across the wilderness,
My left foot always lower on the hill,

And suddenly—a leopard, near the place
The way grew steep: lithe, spotted, quick of foot.
Blocking the path, she stayed before my face

And more than once she made me turn about
To go back down. It was early morning still,
30 The fair sun rising with the stars attending it

- 40 mosse di prima quelle cose belle;
sì ch'a bene sperar m'era cagione
di quella fiera a la gaetta pelle
l'ora del tempo e la dolce stagione;
ma non sì che paura non mi desse
la vista che m'apparve d'un leone.
Questi pareva che contra me venisse
con la test' alta e con rabbiosa fame,
sì che pareva che l'aere ne tremesse.
Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame
50 semiava carca ne la sua magrezza,
e molte genti fé già viver grame,
questa mi porse tanto di gravezza
con la paura ch'uscia di sua vista,
ch'io perdei la speranza de l'altezza.
E qual è quei che volontieri acquista,
e giugne 'l tempo che perder lo face,
che 'n tutti suoi pensier piange e s'attrista;
tal mi fece la bestia senza pace,
che, venendomi 'ncontro, a poco a poco
60 mi ripignevà là dove 'l sol tace.
Mentre ch'i' rovinava in basso loco,
dinanzi a li occhi mi si fu offerto
chi per lungo silenzio pareva fioco.
Quando vidi costui nel gran deserto,
«Miserere di me», gridai a lui,
«qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!».
Rispuosemi: «Non omo, omo già fui,
e li parenti miei furon lombardi,
mantoani per patria ambedui.
70 Nàcqui sub Iulio, ancor che fosse tardi,
e vissi a Roma sotto 'l buono Augusto
nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi.
Poeta fui, e cantai di quel giusto
figliuol d'Anchise che venne di Troia,
poi che 'l superbo Ilíon fu combusto.
Ma tu perché ritorni a tanta noia?
perché non sali il dilettoso monte
ch'è principio e cagion di tutta gioia?».
«Or se' tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte
80 che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume?»,
rispuos' io lui con vergognosa fronte.

As when Divine Love set those beautiful
Lights into motion at creation's dawn,
And the time of day and season combined to fill

My heart with hope of that beast with festive skin—
But not so much that the next sight wasn't fearful:
A lion came at me, his head high as he ran,

Roaring with hunger so the air appeared to tremble.
Then, a grim she-wolf—whose leanness seemed to compress
All the world's cravings, that had made miserable

40 Such multitudes; she put such heaviness
Into my spirit, I lost hope of the crest.
Like someone eager to win, who tested by loss

Surrenders to gloom and weeps, so did that beast
Make me feel, as harrying toward me at a lope
She forced me back toward where the sun is lost.

While I was ruining myself back down to the deep,
Someone appeared—one who seemed nearly to fade
As though from long silence. I cried to his human shape

In that great wasteland: "Living man or shade,
50 Have pity and help me, whichever you may be!"
"No living man, though once I was," he replied.

"My parents both were Mantuans from Lombardy,
And I was born *sub Julio*, the latter end.
I lived in good Augustus's Rome, in the day

Of the false gods who lied. A poet, I hymned
Anchises' noble son, who came from Troy
When superb Ilium in its pride was burned.

But you—why go back down to such misery?
Why not ascend the delightful mountain, source
60 And principle that causes every joy?"

"Then are you Virgil? Are you the font that pours
So overwhelming a river of human speech?"
I answered, shamefaced. "The glory and light are yours,

«O de li altri poeti onore e lume,
 vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore
 che m'ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume.
 Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore,
 tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi
 lo bello stilo che m'ha fatto onore.
 Vedi la bestia per cu' io mi volsi;
 aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,
 90 ch'ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi».

«A te convien tenere altro viaggio»,
 rispuose, poi che lagrimar mi vide,
 «se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio;
 ché questa bestia, per la qual tu gride,
 non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,
 ma tanto lo 'mpedisce che l'uccide;
 e ha natura sì malvagia e ria,
 che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,
 e dopo 'l pasto ha più fame che pria.
 100 Molti son li animali a cui s'ammoglia,
 e più saranno ancora, infin che 'l veltro
 verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.
 Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,
 ma sapienza, amore e virtute,
 e sua nazione sarà tra feltro e feltro.
 Di quella umile Italia fia salute
 per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
 Eurialo e Turno e Niso di ferute.
 Questi la caccerà per ogne villa,
 110 fin che l'avrà rimessa ne lo 'nferno,
 là onde 'nvidia prima dipartilla.
 Ond' io per lo tuo me' penso e discerno
 che tu mi segui, e io sarò tua guida,
 e trarrotti di quì per loco eterno;
 ove udirai le disperate strida,
 vedrai li antichi spiriti dolenti,
 che la seconda morte ciascun grida;
 e vederai color che son contenti
 nel foco, perché speran di venire
 120 quando che sia a le beate genti.

That poets follow—may the love that made me search
Your book in patient study avail me, Master!
You are my guide and author, whose verses teach

The graceful style whose model has done me honor.
See this beast driving me backward—help me resist,
For she makes all my veins and pulses shudder.”

70 “A different path from this one would be best
For you to find your way from this feral place,”
He answered, seeing how I wept. “This beast,

The cause of your complaint, lets no one pass
Her way—but harries all to death. Her nature
Is so malign and vicious she cannot appease

Her voracity, for feeding makes her hungrier.
Many are the beasts she mates: there will be more,
Until the Hound comes who will give this creature

80 A painful death. Not nourished by earthly fare,
He will be fed by wisdom, goodness and love.
Born between Feltro and Feltro, he shall restore

Low Italy, as Nisus fought to achieve.
And Turnus, Euryalus, Camilla the maiden—
All dead from wounds in war. He will remove

This lean wolf, hunting her through every region
Till he has thrust her back to Hell’s abyss
Where Envy first dispatched her on her mission.

90 Therefore I judge it best that you should choose
To follow me, and I will be your guide
Away from here and through an eternal place:

To hear the cries of despair, and to behold
Ancient tormented spirits as they lament
In chorus the second death they must abide.

Then you shall see those souls who are content
To dwell in fire because they hope some day
To join the blessed: toward whom, if your ascent

*A le quai poi se tu vorrai salire,
anima fia a ciò più di me degna:
con lei ti lascerò nel mio partire;
ché quello imperador che là sù regna,
perch' i' fu' ribellante a la sua legge,
non vuol che 'n sua città per me si vegna.
In tutte parti impera e quivì regge;
quivì è la sua città e l'alto seggio:
oh felice colui cu' ivi elegge!».*

130 *E io a lui: «Poeta, io ti richieggo
per quello Dio che tu non conoscesti,
acciò ch'io fugga questo male e peggio,
che tu mi meni là dov'or dicesti,
sì ch'io veggia la porta di san Pietro
e color cui tu fai cotanto mesti».
Allor si mosse, e io li tenni dietro.*

Continues, your guide will be one worthier than I—
When I must leave you, you will be with her.
For the Emperor who governs from on high

100 Wills I not enter His city, where none may appear
Who lived like me in rebellion to His law.
His empire is everything and everywhere,

But that is His kingdom, His city, His seat of awe.
Happy is the soul He chooses for that place!"
I: "Poet, please—by the God you did not know—

Help me escape this evil that I face,
And worse. Lead me to witness what you have said,
Saint Peter's gate, and the multitude of woes—"

Then he set out, and I followed where he led.

CANTO II

- Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
 toglieva li animai che sono in terra
 da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno
 m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
 sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
 che ritarrà la mente che non erra.
 O muse, o alto ingegno, or m'aiutate;
 o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi,
 qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.*
- 10 *Io cominciai: «Poeta che mi guidi,
 guarda la mia virtù s'ell' è possente,
 prima ch'a l'alto passo tu mi fidi.
 Tu dici che di Silvïo il parente,
 corruttibile ancora, ad immortale
 secolo andò, e fu sensibilmente.
 Però, se l'avversario d'ogne male
 cortese i fu, pensando l'alto effetto
 ch'uscir dovea di lui, e 'l chi e 'l quale,
 non pare indegno ad omo d'intelletto;*
- 20 *ch'e' fu de l'alma Roma e di suo impero
 ne l'empireo ciel per padre eletto:
 la quale e 'l quale, a voler dir lo vero,
 fu stabilita per lo loco santo
 u' siede il successor del maggior Piero.
 Per quest' andata onde li dai tu vanto,
 intese cose che furon cagione
 di sua vittoria e del papale ammanto.
 Andovvi poi lo Vas d'elezione,
 per recarne conforto a quella fede*
- 30 *ch'è principio a la via di salvazione.
 Ma io, perché venirvi? o chi 'l concede?
 Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono;
 me degno a ciò né io né altri 'l crede.
 Per che, se del venire io m'abbandono,
 temo che la venuta non sia folle.
 Se' savio; intendi me' ch'i' non ragiono».*

CANTO II

Day was departing, and the darkening air
Called all earth's creatures to their evening quiet
While I alone was preparing as though for war

To struggle with my journey and with the spirit
Of pity, which flawless memory will redraw:
O Muses, O genius of art, O memory whose merit

Has inscribed inwardly those things I saw—
Help me fulfill the perfection of your nature.
I commenced: "Poet, take my measure now:

10 Appraise my powers before you trust me to venture
Through that deep passage where you would be my guide.
You write of the journey Silvius's father

Made to immortal realms although he stayed
A mortal witness, in his corruptible body.
That the Opponent of all evil bestowed

Such favor on him befits him, chosen for glory
By highest heaven to be the father of Rome
And of Rome's empire—later established Holy,

20 Seat of great Peter's heir. You say he came
To that immortal world, and things he learned
There led to the papal mantle—and triumph for him.

Later, the Chosen Vessel too went and returned,
Carrying confirmation of that faith
Which opens the way with salvation at its end.

But I—what cause, whose favor, could send me forth
On such a voyage? I am no Aeneas or Paul:
Not I nor others think me of such worth,

And therefore I have my fears of playing the fool
To embark on such a venture. You are wise:
30 You know my meaning better than I can tell."

E qual è quei che disvuol ciò che volle
 e per novi pensier cangia proposta,
 sì che dal cominciar tutto si tolle,
 40 tal mi fec' io 'n quella oscura costa,
 perché, pensando, consumai la 'mpresa
 che fu nel cominciar cotanto tosta.
 «S'i' ho ben la parola tua intesa»,
 rispuose del magnanimo quell' ombra,
 «l'anima tua è da viltade offesa;
 la qual molte fi'ate l'omo ingombra
 sì che d'onrata impresa lo rivolve,
 come falso veder bestia quand' ombra.
 Da questa tema acciò che tu ti solve,
 50 dirotti perch' io venni e quel ch'io 'ntesi
 nel primo punto che di te mi dolve.
 Io era tra color che son sospesi,
 e donna mi chiamò beata e bella,
 tal che di comandare io la richiesi.
 Lucevan li occhi suoi più che la stella;
 e cominciommi a dir soave e piana,
 con angelica voce, in sua favella:
 “O anima cortese mantoana,
 di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura,
 60 e durerà quanto 'l mondo lontana,
 l'amico mio, e non de la ventura,
 ne la diserta piaggia è impedito
 sì nel cammin, che vòlt' è per paura;
 e temo che non sia già sì smarrito,
 ch'io mi sia tardi al soccorso levata,
 per quel ch'i' ho di lui nel cielo udito.
 Or movi, e con la tua parola ornata
 e con ciò c'ha mestieri al suo campare,
 l'aiuta sì ch'i' ne sia consolata.
 70 I' son Beatrice che ti faccio andare;
 vegno del loco ove tornar disio;
 amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare.
 Quando sarò dinanzi al signor mio,
 di te mi loderò sovente a lui”.
 Tacette allora, e poi comincia' io:
 “O donna di virtù, sola per cui
 l'umana spezie eccede ogni contento
 di quel ciel c'ha minor li cerchi sui,

And then, like one who unchooses his own choice
And thinking again undoes what he has started,
So I became: a nullifying unease

Overcame my soul on that dark slope and voided
The undertaking I had so quickly embraced.
“If I understand,” the generous shade retorted,

“Cowardice grips your spirit—which can twist
A man away from the noblest enterprise
As a trick of vision startles a shying beast.

40 To ease your burden of fear, I will disclose
Why I came here, and what I heard that compelled
Me first to feel compassion for you: it was

A lady’s voice that called me where I dwelled
In Limbo—a lady so blessed and fairly featured
I prayed her to command me. Her eyes out-jeweled

The stars in splendor. ‘O generous Mantuan spirit,’
She began in a soft voice of angelic sound,
‘Whose fame lives still, that the world will still inherit

As long as the world itself shall live: my friend—
50 No friend of Fortune—has found his way impeded
On the barren slope, and fear has turned him round.

I fear he may be already lost, unaided:
So far astray, I’ve come from Heaven too late.
Go now, with your fair speech and what is needed

To save him; offer the help you have to give
Before he is lost, and I will be consoled.
I am Beatrice, come from where I crave

To be again, who ask this. As love has willed,
So have I spoken. And when I return
60 Before my Lord, He will hear your praises told.’

Then she was silent; and I in turn began,
‘O Lady of goodness, through whom alone mankind
Exceeds what the sky’s least circle can contain

tanto m'aggrada il tuo comandamento,
 80 che l'ubidir, se già fosse, m'è tardi;
 più non t'è uo' ch'aprimi il tuo talento.
 Ma dimmi la cagion che non ti guardi
 de lo scender qua giuso in questo centro
 de l'ampio loco ove tornar tu ardi".
 "Da che tu vuo' saver cotanto a dentro,
 dirotti brevemente", mi rispuose,
 "perch' i' non temo di venir qua entro.
 Temer si dee di sole quelle cose
 c'hanno potenza di fare altrui male;
 90 de l'altre no, ché non son paurose.
 I' son fatta da Dio, sua mercé, tale,
 che la vostra miseria non mi tange,
 né fiamma d'esto 'ncendio non m'assale.
 Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compianghe
 di questo 'mpedimento ov' io ti mando,
 sì che duro giudicio là sù frange.
 Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando
 e disse:—Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele
 di te, e io a te lo raccomando—.
 100 Lucia, nimica di ciascun crudele,
 sì mosse, e venne al loco dov' i' era,
 che mi sedea con l'antica Rachele.
 Disse:—Beatrice, loda di Dio vera,
 ché non soccorri quei che t'amò tanto,
 ch'uscì per te de la volgare schiera?
 Non odi tu la pieta del suo pianto,
 non vedi tu la morte che 'l combatte
 su la fiumana ove 'l mar non ha vanto?—.

Al mondo non fur mai persone ratte
 110 a far lor pro o a fuggir lor danno,
 com' io, dopo cotai parole fatte,
 venni qua giù del mio beato scanno,
 fidandomi del tuo parlare onesto,
 ch'onora te e quei ch'udito l'hanno".
 Poscia che m'ebbe ragionato questo,
 li occhi lucenti lagrimando volse,
 per che mi fece del venir più presto.
 E venni a te così com' ella volse:
 d'inanzi a quella fiera ti levai
 120 che del bel monte il corto andar ti tolse.

Within its compass: so sweet is your command
Had I already obeyed, it would feel too late.
But tell me how you so fearlessly descend

To such a center—from that encompassing state
You long to see again?’ ‘You yearn for the answer
Deeply,’ she said, ‘so I will tell in short

70 How I can come to Limbo, yet feel no terror:
Fear befits things with power for injury,
Not things that lack such power. God the Creator

Has by His mercy made me such that I
Cannot feel what you suffer: none of this fire
Assails me. In Heaven a Lady feels such pity

For this impediment where I send you, severe
Judgment is broken by her grace on high.
To Lucy she said: “Your faithful follower

Needs you: I commend him to you.” Lucy, the foe
80 Of every cruelty, found me where I sat
With Rachel of old, and urged me: “Beatrice, true

Glory of God, can you not come to the aid
Of one who had such love for you he rose
Above the common crowd? Do you not heed

The pity of his cries? And do your eyes
Not see death near him, in a flood the ocean
Itself can boast no power to surpass?”

Never on earth was anyone spurred to motion
So quickly, to seize advantage or fly from danger,
90 As at these words I hurried here from Heaven—

Trusting your eloquence, whose gift brings honor
Both to yourself and to all those who listen.’
Having said this, she turned toward me the splendor

Of her eyes lucent with tears—which made me hasten
To save you, even more eagerly than before:
And so I rescued you on the fair mountain

Dunque: che è? perché, perché restai,
 perché tanta viltà nel core allette,
 perché ardire e franchezza non hai,
 poscia che tai tre donne benedette
 curan di te ne la corte del cielo,
 e 'l mio parlar tanto ben ti promette?».

Quali fioretti dal notturno gelo
 chinati e chiusi, poi che 'l sol li 'mbianca,
 si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo,
 130 tal mi fec' io di mia virtude stanca,
 e tanto buono ardire al cor mi corse,
 ch'ì' cominciai come persona franca:
 «Oh pietosa colei che mi soccorse!
 e te cortese ch'ubidisti tosto
 a le vere parole che ti porse!
 Tu m'hai con desiderio il cor disposto
 sì al venir con le parole tue,
 ch'ì' son tornato nel primo proposto.
 Or va, ch'un sol volere è d'ambedue:
 140 tu duca, tu signore e tu maestro».

Così li dissi; e poi che mosso fue,
 intrai per lo cammino alto e silvestro.

Where the beast blocked the short way up. Therefore,
What is this? Why, why should you hold back?
Why be a coward rather than bolder, freer—

100 Since in the court of Heaven for your sake
Three blessed ladies watch, and words of mine
Have promised a good as great as you might seek?"

As flowers bent and shrunken by night at dawn
Unfold and straighten on their stems, to wake
Brightened by sunlight, so I grew strong again—

Good courage coursing through my heart, I spoke
Like one set free: "How full of true compassion
Was she who helped me, how courteous and quick

110 Were you to follow her bidding—and your narration
Has restored my spirit. Now, on: for I feel eager
To go with you, and cleave to my first intention.

From now, we two will share one will together:
You are my teacher, my master, and my guide."
So I spoke, and when he moved I followed after

And entered on that deep and savage road.

- 'Per me si va ne la città dolente,
 per me si va ne l'eterno dolore,
 per me si va tra la perduta gente.
 Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
 fecemi la divina podestate,
 la somma sapienza e 'l primo amore.
 Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create
 se non eterne, e io eterna duro.
 Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate'.*
- 10 *Queste parole di colore oscuro
 vid' io scritte al sommo d'una porta;
 per ch'io: «Maestro, il senso lor m'è duro».*
Ed elli a me, come persona accorta:
*«Qui si convien lasciare ogne sospetto;
 ogne viltà convien che qui sia morta.
 Noi siam venuti al loco ov' i' t'ho detto
 che tu vedrai le genti dolorose
 c'hanno perduto il ben de l'intelletto».*
E poi che la sua mano a la mia puose
 20 *con lieto volto, ond' io mi confortai,
 mi mise dentro a le segrete cose.*
*Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai
 risonavan per l'aere senza stelle,
 per ch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.*
*Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
 parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,
 voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle
 facevano un tumulto, il qual s'aggira
 sempre in quell' aura senza tempo tinta,*
 30 *come la rena quando turbo spira.*
*E io ch'avea d'orror la testa cinta,
 dissi: «Maestro, che è quel ch'i' odo?
 e che gent' è che par nel duol sì vinta?».*

CANTO III

THROUGH ME YOU ENTER INTO THE CITY OF WOES,
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER INTO ETERNAL PAIN,
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER THE POPULATION OF LOSS.

JUSTICE MOVED MY HIGH MAKER, IN POWER DIVINE,
WISDOM SUPREME, LOVE PRIMAL. NO THINGS WERE
BEFORE ME NOT ETERNAL; ETERNAL I REMAIN.

ABANDON ALL HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER HERE.

These words I saw inscribed in some dark color
Over a portal. "Master," I said, "make clear

10 Their meaning, which I find too hard to gather."
Then he, as one who understands: "All fear
Must be left here, and cowardice die. Together,

We have arrived where I have told you: here
You will behold the wretched souls who've lost
The good of intellect." Then, with good cheer

In his expression to encourage me, he placed
His hand on mine: so, trusting to my guide,
I followed him among things undisclosed.

20 The sighs, groans and laments at first were so loud,
Resounding through starless air, I began to weep:
Strange languages, horrible screams, words imbued

With rage or despair, cries as of troubled sleep
Or of a tortured shrillness—they rose in a coil
Of tumult, along with noises like the slap

Of beating hands, all fused in a ceaseless flail
That churns and frenzies that dark and timeless air
Like sand in a whirlwind. And I, my head in a swirl

Of error, cried: "Master, what is this I hear?
What people are these, whom pain has overcome?"
30 He: "This is the sorrowful state of souls unsure,

Ed elli a me: «Questo misero modo
 tegnon l'anime triste di coloro
 che visser senza 'nfamia e senza lodo.
 Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro
 de li angeli che non furon ribelli
 né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro.
 40 Caccianli i ciel per non esser men belli,
 né lo profondo inferno li riceve,
 ch'alcuna gloria i rei avrebber d'elli».

E io: «Maestro, che è tanto greve
 a lor che lamentar li fa sì forte?».

Rispuose: «Dicerolti molto breve.
 Questi non hanno speranza di morte,
 e la lor cieca vita è tanto bassa,
 che 'nvidiosi son d'ogne altra sorte.
 Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa;
 50 misericordia e giustizia li sdegna:
 non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa».

E io, che riguardai, vidi una 'nsegna
 che girando correva tanto ratta,
 che d'ogne posa mi pareva indegna;
 e dietro le venia sì lunga tratta
 di gente, ch'i' non averei creduto
 che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta.
 Poscia ch'io v'ebbi alcun riconosciuto,
 vidi e conobbi l'ombra di colui
 60 che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto.

Incontanente intesi e certo fui
 che questa era la setta d'i cattivi,
 a Dio spiacenti e a' nemici sui.
 Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi,
 erano ignudi e stimolati molto
 da mosconi e da vespe ch'eran ivi.
 Elle rigavan lor di sangue il volto,
 che, mischiato di lagrime, a' lor piedi
 da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.

70 E poi ch'a riguardar oltre mi diedi,
 vidi genti a la riva d'un gran fiume;
 per ch'io dissi: «Maestro, or mi concedi
 ch'i' sappia quali sono, e qual costume
 le fa di trapassar parer sì pronte,
 com' i' discerno per lo fioco lume».

Whose lives earned neither honor nor bad fame.
And they are mingled with angels of that base sort
Who, neither rebellious to God nor faithful to Him,

Chose neither side, but kept themselves apart—
Now Heaven expels them, not to mar its splendor,
And Hell rejects them, lest the wicked of heart

Take glory over them.” And then I: “Master,
What agony is it, that makes them keen their grief
With so much force?” He: “I will make brief answer:

40 They have no hope of death, but a blind life
So abject, they envy any other fate.
To all memory of them, the world is deaf.

Mercy and justice disdain them. Let us not
Speak of them: look and pass on.” I looked again:
A whirling banner sped at such a rate

It seemed it might never stop; behind it a train
Of souls, so long that I would not have thought
Death had undone so many. When more than one

I recognized had passed, I beheld the shade
50 Of him who made the Great Refusal, impelled
By cowardice: so at once I understood

Beyond all doubt that this was the dreary guild
Repellent both to God and His enemies—
Hapless ones never alive, their bare skin galled

By wasps and flies, blood trickling down the face,
Mingling with tears for harvest underfoot
By writhing maggots. Then, when I turned my eyes

Farther along our course, I could make out
People upon the shore of some great river.
60 “Master,” I said, “it seems by this dim light

That all of these are eager to cross over—
Can you tell me by what law, and who they are?”
He answered, “Those are things you will discover

Ed elli a me: «Le cose ti fier conte
 quando noi fermerem li nostri passi
 su la trista riviera d'Acheronte».

Allora con li occhi vergognosi e bassi,
 80 temendo no 'l mio dir li fosse grave,
 infino al fiume del parlar mi trassi.
 Ed ecco verso noi venir per nave
 un vecchio, bianco per antico pelo,
 gridando: «Guai a voi, anime prave!
 Non isperate mai veder lo cielo:
 i' vegno per menarvi a l'altra riva
 ne le tenebre etterne, in caldo e 'n gelo.
 E tu che se' costì, anima viva,
 pàrtiti da cotesti che son morti».

90 Ma poi che vide ch'io non mi partiva,
 disse: «Per altra via, per altri porti
 verrai a piaggia, non quì, per passare:
 più lieve legno convien che ti porti».

E 'l duca lui: «Caron, non ti crucciare:
 vuolsi così colà dove si puote
 ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare».

Quindi fuor quete le lanose gote
 al nocchier de la livida palude,
 che 'ntorno a li occhi avea di fiamme rote.

100 Ma quell' anime, ch'eran lasse e nude,
 cangiar colore e dibattero i denti,
 ratto che 'nteser le parole crude.
 Bestemmiaavano Dio e lor parenti,
 l'umana spezie e 'l loco e 'l tempo e 'l seme
 di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.

Poi si ritrasser tutte quante insieme,
 forte piangendo, a la riva malvagia
 ch'attende ciascun uom che Dio non teme.

Caron dimonio, con occhi di bragia,
 110 loro accennando, tutte le raccoglie;
 batte col remo qualunque s'adagia.
 Come d'autunno si levan le foglie
 l'una appresso de l'altra, fin che 'l ramo
 vede a la terra tutte le sue spoglie,
 similmente il mal seme d'Adamo
 gittansi di quel lito ad una ad una,
 per cenni come augel per suo richiamo.

When we have paused at Acheron's dismal shore."
I walked on with my head down after that,
Fearful I had displeased him, and spoke no more.

Then, at the river—an old man in a boat:
White-haired, as he drew closer shouting at us,
"Woe to you, wicked souls! Give up the thought

70 Of Heaven! I come to ferry you across
Into eternal dark on the opposite side,
Into fire and ice! And you there—leave this place,

You living soul, stand clear of these who are dead!"
And then, when he saw that I did not obey:
"By other ports, in a lighter boat," he said,

"You will be brought to shore by another way."
My master spoke then, "Charon, do not rage:
Thus is it willed where everything may be

Simply if it is willed. Therefore, oblige,
80 And ask no more." That silenced the grizzled jaws
Of the gray ferryman of the livid marsh,

Who had red wheels of flame about his eyes.
But at his words the forlorn and naked souls
Were changing color, cursing the human race,

God and their parents. Teeth chattering in their skulls,
They called curses on the seed, the place, the hour
Of their own begetting and their birth. With wails

And tears they gathered on the evil shore
That waits for all who don't fear God. There demon
90 Charon beckons them, with his eyes of fire;

Crowded in a herd, they obey if he should summon,
And he strikes at any laggards with his oar.
As leaves in quick succession sail down in autumn

Until the bough beholds its entire store
Fallen to the earth, so Adam's evil seed
Swoop from the bank when each is called, as sure

Così sen vanno su per l'onda bruna,
e avanti che sien di là discese,
120 anche di qua nuova schiera s'auna.
«Figliuol mio», disse 'l maestro cortese,
«quelli che muoion ne l'ira di Dio
tutti convegnon qui d'ogne paese;
e pronti sono a trapassar lo rio,
ché la divina giustizia li sprona,
sì che la tema si volve in disio.
Quinci non passa mai anima buona;
e però, se Caron di te si lagna,
ben puoi sapere omai che 'l suo dir suona».
130 Finito questo, la buia campagna
tremò sì forte, che de lo spavento
la mente di sudore ancor mi bagna.
La terra lagrimosa diede vento,
che balenò una luce vermiglia
la qual mi vinse ciascun sentimento;
e caddi come l'uom cui sonno piglia.

As a trained falcon, to cross to the other side
Of the dark water; and before one throng can land
On the far shore, on this side new souls crowd.

100 "My son," said the gentle master, "here are joined
The souls of all who die in the wrath of God,
From every country, all of them eager to find

Their way across the water—for the goad
Of Divine Justice spurs them so, their fear
Is transmuted to desire. Souls who are good

Never pass this way; therefore, if you hear
Charon complaining at your presence, consider
What that means." Then, the earth of that grim shore

Began to shake: so violently, I shudder
110 And sweat recalling it now. A wind burst up
From the tear-soaked ground to erupt red light and batter

My senses—and so I fell, as though seized by sleep.

CANTO IV

*Ruppemi l'alto sonno ne la testa
 un greve truono, sì ch'io mi riscossi
 come persona ch'è per forza desta;
 e l'occhio riposato intorno mossi,
 dritto levato, e fiso riguardai
 per conoscer lo loco dov' io fossi.
 Vero è che 'n su la proda mi trovai
 de la valle d'abisso dolorosa
 che 'ntrono accoglie d'infiniti guai.*
 10 *Oscura e profonda era e nebulosa
 tanto che, per ficcar lo viso a fondo,
 io non vi discerneva alcuna cosa.*
*«Or discendiam qua giù nel cieco mondo»,
 cominciò il poeta tutto smorto.
 «Io sarò primo, e tu sarai secondo».*
*E io, che del color mi fui accorto,
 dissi: «Come verrò, se tu paventi
 che suoli al mio dubbiare esser conforto?».*
*Ed elli a me: «L'angoscia de le genti
 20 che son qua giù, nel viso mi dipigne
 quella pietà che tu per tema senti.*
Andiam, ché la via lunga ne sospigne».
*Così si mise e così mi fé intrare
 nel primo cerchio che l'abisso cigne.*
*Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
 non avea pianto mai che di sospiri
 che l'aura eterna facevan tremare;
 ciò avvenia di duol senza martiri,
 ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,
 d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.*
 30 *Lo buon maestro a me: «Tu non dimandi
 che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?
 Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
 ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,
 non basta, perché non ebber battesimo,
 ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;
 e s'e' furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,
 non adorar debitamente a Dio:
 e di questi cotai son io medesmo.*

CANTO IV

Breaking the deep sleep that filled my head,
A heavy clap of thunder startled me up
As though by force; with rested eyes I stood

Peering to find where I was—in truth, the lip
Above the chasm of pain, which holds the din
Of infinite grief: a gulf so dark and deep

And murky that though I gazed intently down
Into the canyon, I could see nothing below.
“Now we descend into the sightless zone,”

10 The poet began, dead pale now: “I will go
Ahead, you second.” I answered, seeing his pallor,
“How can I venture here if even you,

Who have encouraged me every time I falter,
Turn white with fear?” And he: “It is the pain
People here suffer that paints my face this color

Of pity, which you mistake for fear. Now on:
Our long road urges us forward.” And he entered
The abyss’s first engirdling circle, and down

He had me enter it too. Here we encountered
20 No laments that we could hear—except for sighs
That trembled the timeless air: they emanated

From the shadowy sadnesses, not agonies,
Of multitudes of children and women and men.
He said, “And don’t you ask, what spirits are these?”

Before you go on, I tell you: they did not sin;
If they have merit, it can’t suffice without
Baptism, portal to the faith you maintain.

Some lived before the Christian faith, so that
They did not worship God aright—and I
30 Am one of these. Through this, no other fault,

- 40 *Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
che senza speme vivemo in disio».*
*Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo 'ntesi,
però che gente di molto valore
conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi.*
*«Dimmi, maestro mio, dimmi, signore»,
comincia' io per volere esser certo
di quella fede che vince ogni errore:*
«uscicci mai alcuno, o per suo merto
50 *o per altrui, che poi fosse beato?».*
*E quei che 'ntese il mio parlar coverto,
rispuose: «Io era nuovo in questo stato,
quando ci vidi venire un possente,
con segno di vittoria coronato.*
*Trasseci l'ombra del primo parente,
d'Abèl suo figlio e quella di Noè,
di Moïse legista e ubidente;
Abraàm patriarca e David re,
Israèl con lo padre e co' suoi nati*
60 *e con Rachele, per cui tanto fé,
e altri molti, e feceli beati.*
*E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,
spiriti umani non eran salvati».*
*Non lasciavam l'andar perch' ei dicessi,
ma passavam la selva tuttavia,
la selva, dico, di spiriti spessi.*
*Non era lunga ancor la nostra via
di qua dal sonno, quand' io vidi un foco
ch'emisperio di tenebre vincia.*
70 *Di lungi n'eravamo ancora un poco,
ma non sì ch'io non discernessi in parte
ch'orrevol gente possedeo quel loco.*
*«O tu ch'onori scïenzia e arte,
questi chi son c'hanno cotanta onranza,
che dal modo de li altri li diparte?».*

We are lost, afflicted only this one way:
That having no hope, we live in longing." I heard
These words with heartfelt grief that seized on me

Knowing how many worthy souls endured
Suspension in that Limbo. "Dear sir, my master,"
I began, wanting to be reassured

In the faith that conquers every error, "Did ever
Anyone go forth from here—by his own good
Or perhaps another's—to join the blessed, after?"

40 He understood my covert meaning, and said,
"I was new to this condition, when I beheld
A Mighty One who descended here, arrayed

With a crown of victory. And He re-called
Back from this place the shade of our first parent,
And his son Abel, and other shades who dwelled

In Limbo. Noah, and Moses the obedient
Giver of laws, went with Him, and Abraham
The patriarch. King David and Israel went,

And Israel's sire and children, and Rachel for whom
50 He labored so long, and many others—and His
Coming here made them blessed, and rescued them.

Know this: no human soul was saved, till these."
We did not stop our traveling while he spoke,
But kept on passing through the woods—not trees,

But a wood of thronging spirits; nor did we make
Much distance from the place where I had slept,
When I saw a fire that overcame a bleak

Hemisphere of darkness. Well before we stopped
To address them, I could see people there and sense
60 They were honorable folk. "O Master apt

In science and art, who honor both, what wins
These shades distinction? Who are they who command
A place so separate from the other ones?"

E quelli a me: «L'onrata nominanza
 che di lor suona sù ne la tua vita,
 grazia acquista in ciel che sì li avanza».
 Intanto voce fu per me udita:
 80 «Onorate l'altissimo poeta;
 l'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita».
 Poi che la voce fu restata e queta,
 vidi quattro grand' ombre a noi venire:
 sembianz' avevan né trista né lieta.
 Lo buon maestro cominciò a dire:
 «Mira colui con quella spada in mano,
 che vien dinanzi ai tre sì come sire:
 quelli è Omero poeta sovrano;
 l'altro è Orazio satiro che vene;
 90 Ovidio è 'l terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano.
 Però che ciascun meco si convene
 nel nome che sonò la voce sola,
 fannomi onore, e di ciò fanno bene».
 Così vid' i' adunar la bella scola
 di quel signor de l'altissimo canto
 che sovra li altri com' aquila vola.
 Da ch'ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,
 volersi a me con salutevol cenno,
 e 'l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;
 100 e più d'onore ancora assai mi fenno,
 ch'e' sì mi fecer de la loro schiera,
 sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.
 Così andammo infino a la lumera,
 parlando cose che 'l tacere è bello,
 sì com' era 'l parlar colà dov' era.
 Venimmo al piè d'un nobile castello,
 sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,
 difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello.
 Questo passammo come terra dura;
 110 per sette porte intrai con questi savi:
 giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura.

And he: "Their honored names, which still resound
In your life above, have earned them Heaven's grace,
Advancing them here." Meanwhile a voice intoned:

"Hail the great Poet, whose shade had left this place
And now returns!" After the voice fell still,
I saw four great shades making their way to us,

70 Their aspect neither sad nor joyful. "Note well,"
My master began, "the one who carries a sword
And strides before the others, as fits his role

Among these giants: he is Homer, their lord
The sovereign poet; the satirist follows him—
Horace, with Lucan last, and Ovid third:

That lone voice just now hailed me by a name
Each of them shares with me; in such accord
They honor me well." And so I saw, all come

80 Together there, the splendid school of the lord
Of highest song who like an eagle soars high
Above the others. After they had shared a word

Among themselves, they turned and greeted me
With cordial gestures, at which my master smiled;
And far more honor: that fair company

Then made me one among them—so as we traveled
Onward toward the light I made a sixth
Amid such store of wisdom. Thus we strolled,

Speaking of matters I will not give breath,
Silence as fitting now as speech was there.
90 At length, a noble castle blocked our path,

Encircled seven times by a barrier
Of lofty walls, and defended round about
By a handsome stream we strode across: it bore

Our weight like solid ground; and after that
I passed through seven gateways with the sages.
We came to a fresh green meadow, where we met

Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
 di grande autorità ne' lor sembianti:
 parlavan rado, con voci soavi.
 Traemmoci così da l'un de' canti,
 in loco aperto, luminoso e alto,
 sì che veder si potien tutti quanti.
 Colà diritto, sovra 'l verde smalto,
 mi fuor mostrati li spiriti magni,
 120 che del vedere in me stesso m'essalto.
 I' vidi Eletra con molti compagni,
 tra' quai conobbi Ettore ed Enea,
 Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni.
 Vidi Cammilla e la Pantasilea;
 da l'altra parte vidi 'l re Latino
 che con Lavina sua figlia sedea.
 Vidi quel Bruto che cacciò Tarquino,
 Lucrezia, Iulia, Marzia e Corniglia;
 e solo, in parte, vidi 'l Saladino.
 130 Poi ch'innalzai un poco più le ciglia,
 vidi 'l maestro di color che sanno
 seder tra filosofica famiglia.
 Tutti lo miran, tutti onor li fanno:
 quivi vid' io Socrate e Platone,
 che 'nnanzi a li altri più presso li stanno;
 Democrito che 'l mondo a caso pone,
 Diogenès, Anassagora e Tale,
 Empedoclès, Eraclito e Zenone;
 e vidi il buono accoglitor del quale,
 140 Diascoride dico; e vidi Orfeo,
 Tulio e Lino e Seneca morale;
 Euclide geomètra e Tolomeo,
 Ipocràte, Avicenna e Galieno,
 Averois che 'l gran comento feo.

A group of people. With grave, deliberate gazes
And manners of great authority, they spoke
Sparingly and in gentle, courtly voices.

100 We drew aside to a place where we could look
From a spacious well-lit height and view them all:
On that enameled green I saw—and take

Glory within me for having seen them, still—
The spirits of the great: I saw Electra
With many companions, among whom I knew well

Which shades were those of Aeneas and of Hector,
And Caesar—who wore his armor, falcon-eyed.
I saw Camilla, and Penthesilea beside her;

I saw King Latinus on the other side,
110 And sitting by him his daughter Lavinia.
I saw that Brutus from whom Tarquin fled,

I saw Lucretia, Julia, Marcia, Cornelia;
And sitting at a distance separately
I saw lone Saladin of Arabia.

I raised my eyes a little, and there was he
Who is acknowledged Master of those who know,
Sitting in a philosophic family

Who look to him and do him honor. I saw
Nearest him, in front, Plato and Socrates.
120 I saw Democritus, who strove to show

That the world is chance; Zeno, Empedocles,
Anaxagoras, Thales, Heraclitus,
Diogenes. The collector of qualities

Of things, Dioscorides. And Orpheus,
Cicero, Linus, Seneca the moralist,
Euclid the geometer, Ptolemy, Hippocrates,

Galen, Avicenna, Averroës who discussed
The Philosopher in his great commentary—
I saw so many I cannot tally the list;

*Io non posso ritrar di tutti a pieno,
però che sì mi caccia il lungo tema,
che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.
La sesta compagnia in due si scema:
per altra via mi mena il savio duca,
fuor de la queta, ne l'aura che trema.
E vegno in parte ove non è che luca.*

130 For my demanding theme so pulls my story,
To multiply the telling would be too little
For the multitude of fact that filled my journey.

The company of six divide and dwindle
To two; my wise guide leads me from that quiet
Another way—again I see air tremble,

And come to a part that has no light inside it.

CANTO V

Così discesi del cerchio primaio
 giù nel secondo, che men loco cinghia
 e tanto più dolor, che punge a guaio.
 Stavvi Minòs orribilmente, e ringhia:
 essamina le colpe ne l'intrata;
 giudica e manda secondo ch'avvinghia.
 Dico che quando l'anima mal nata
 li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa;
 e quel conoscitor de le peccata
 10 vede qual loco d'inferno è da essa;
 cignesi con la coda tante volte
 quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa.
 Sempre dinanzi a lui ne stanno molte:
 vanno a vicenda ciascuna al giudizio,
 dicono e odono e poi son giù volte.
 «O tu che vieni al doloroso ospizio»,
 disse Minòs a me quando mi vide,
 lasciando l'atto di cotanto offizio,
 «guarda com' entri e di cui tu ti fide;
 20 non t'inganni l'ampiezza de l'intrare!».

E 'l duca mio a lui: «Perché pur gride?
 Non impedir lo suo fatale andare:
 vuolsi così colà dove si puote
 ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare».
 Or incomincian le dolenti note
 a farmisi sentire; or son venuto
 là dove molto pianto mi percuote.
 Io venni in loco d'ogne luce muto,
 che mugghia come fa mar per tempesta,
 30 se da contrari venti è combattuto.

CANTO V

So I descended from first to second circle—
Which girdles a smaller space and greater pain,
Which spurs more lamentation. Minos the dreadful

Snarls at the gate. He examines each one's sin,
Judging and disposing as he curls his tail:
That is, when an ill-begotten soul comes down,

It comes before him, and confesses all;
Minos, great connoisseur of sin, discerns
For every spirit its proper place in Hell,

10 And wraps himself in his tail with as many turns
As levels down that shade will have to dwell.
A crowd is always waiting: here each one learns

His judgment and is assigned a place in Hell.
They tell; they hear—and down they all are cast.
“You, who have come to sorrow's hospice, think well,”

Said Minos, who at the sight of me had paused
To interrupt his solemn task mid-deed:
“Beware how you come in and whom you trust,

Don't be deceived because the gate is wide.”
20 My leader answered, “Must you too scold this way?
His destined path is not for you to impede:

Thus is it willed where every thing may be
Because it has been willed. So ask no more.”
And now I can hear the notes of agony

In sad crescendo beginning to reach my ear;
Now I am where the noise of lamentation
Comes at me in blasts of sorrow. I am where

All light is mute, with a bellowing like the ocean
Turbulent in a storm of warring winds,
30 The hurricane of Hell in perpetual motion

*La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
 mena li spirti con la sua rapina;
 voltando e percotendo li molesta.
 Quando giungon davanti a la ruina,
 quivi le strida, il compianto, il lamento;
 bestemmian quivi la virtù divina.*
*Intesi ch'a così fatto tormento
 enno dannati i peccator carnali,
 che la ragion sommettono al talento.*
 40 *E come li stornei ne portan l'ali
 nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena,
 così quel fiato li spirti mali
 di qua, di là, di giù, di sù li mena;
 nulla speranza li conforta mai,
 non che di posa, ma di minor pena.*
*E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
 facendo in aere di sé lunga riga,
 così vid' io venir, traendo guai,
 ombre portate da la detta briga;*
 50 *per ch'ì' dissi: «Maestro, chi son quelle
 genti che l'aura nera sì gastiga?».*
*«La prima di color di cui novelle
 tu vuo' saper», mi disse quelli allotta,
 «fu imperadrice di molte favelle.*
*A vizio di lussuria fu sì rotta,
 che libito fé licito in sua legge,
 per tòrre il biasmo in che era condotta.*
*Ell' è Semiramìs, di cui si legge
 che succedette a Nino e fu sua sposa:*
 60 *tenne la terra che 'l Soldan corregge.*
*L'altra è colei che s'ancise amorosa,
 e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo;
 poi è Cleopatràs lussuriosa.*
*Elena vedi, per cui tanto reo
 tempo si volse, e vedi 'l grande Achille,
 che con amore al fine combatteo.*
*Vedi Paris, Tristano»; e più di mille
 ombre mostrommi e nominommi a dito,
 ch'amor di nostra vita dipartille.*
 70 *Poscia ch'io ebbi 'l mio dottore udito
 nomar le donne antiche e ' cavalieri,
 pietà mi giunse, e fui quasi smarrito.*

Sweeping the ravaged spirits as it rends,
Twists, and torments them. Driven as if to land,
They reach the ruin: groaning, tears, laments,

And cursing of the power of Heaven. I learned
They suffer here who sinned in carnal things—
Their reason mastered by desire, suborned.

As winter starlings riding on their wings
Form crowded flocks, so spirits dip and veer
Foundering in the wind's rough buffetings,

40 Upward or downward, driven here and there
With never ease from pain nor hope of rest.
As chanting cranes will form a line in air,

So I saw souls come uttering cries—wind-tossed,
And lofted by the storm. "Master," I cried,
"Who are these people, by black air oppressed?"

"First among these you wish to know," he said,
"Was empress of many tongues—she so embraced
Lechery that she decreed it justified

Legally, to evade the scandal of her lust:
50 She is that Semiramis of whom we read,
Successor and wife of Ninus, she possessed

The lands the Sultan rules. Next, she who died
By her own hand for love, and broke her vow
To Sychaeus's ashes. After her comes lewd

And wanton Cleopatra. See Helen, too,
Who caused a cycle of many evil years;
And great Achilles, the hero whom love slew

In his last battle. Paris and Tristan are here—"
He pointed out by name a thousand souls
60 Whom love had parted from our life, or more.

When I had heard my teacher tell the rolls
Of knights and ladies of antiquity,
Pity overwhelmed me. Half-lost in its coils,

*I' cominciai: «Poeta, volontieri
parlerei a quei due che 'nsieme vanno,
e paion sì al vento esser leggieri».
Ed elli a me: «Vedrai quando saranno
più presso a noi; e tu allor li piega
per quello amor che i mena, ed ei verranno».*

80 *Sì tosto come il vento a noi li piega,
mossi la voce: «O anime affannate,
venite a noi parlar, s'altri nol niega!».*

*Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
con l'ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido
vegnon per l'aere, dal voler portate;
cotali uscir de la schiera ov' è Dido,
a noi venendo per l'aere maligno,
sì forte fu l'affettüoso grido.*

*«O animal grazioso e benigno
che visitando vai per l'aere perso
90 noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno,
se fosse amico il re de l'universo,
noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace,
poi c'hai pietà del nostro mal perverso.
Di quel che udire e che parlar vi piace,
noi udiremo e parleremo a voi,
mentre che 'l vento, come fa, ci tace.*

*Siede la terra dove nata fui
su la marina dove 'l Po discende
per aver pace co' seguaci sui.*

100 *Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,
prese costui de la bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e 'l modo ancor m'offende.
Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.
Amor condusse noi ad una morte.
Caina attende chi a vita ci spense».
Queste parole da lor ci fuor porte.*

"Poet," I told him, "I would willingly
Speak with those two who move along together,
And seem so light upon the wind." And he:

"When they drift closer—then entreat them hither,
In the name of love that leads them: they will respond."
Soon their course shifted, and the merciless weather

70 Battered them toward us. I called against the wind,
"O wearied souls! If Another does not forbid,
Come speak with us." As doves whom desire has summoned,

With raised wings steady against the current, glide
Guided by will to the sweetness of their nest,
So leaving the flock where Dido was, the two sped

Through the malignant air till they had crossed
To where we stood—so strong was the compulsion
Of my loving call. They spoke across the blast:

"O living soul, who with courtesy and compassion
80 Voyage through black air visiting us who stained
The world with blood: if heaven's King bore affection

For such as we are, suffering in this wind,
Then we would pray to Him to grant you peace
For pitying us in this, our evil end.

Now we will speak and hear as you may please
To speak and hear, while the wind, for our discourse,
Is still. My birthplace is a city that lies

Where the Po finds peace with all its followers.
Love, which in gentle hearts is quickly born,
90 Seized him for my fair body—which, in a fierce

Manner that still torments my soul, was torn
Untimely away from me. Love, which absolves
None who are loved from loving, made my heart burn

With joy so strong that as you see it cleaves
Still to him, here. Love gave us both one death.
Caina awaits the one who took our lives."

110 *Quand' io intesi quell' anime offense,
 china' il viso, e tanto il tenni basso,
 fin che 'l poeta mi disse: «Che pense?».*
*Quando rispuosi, cominciai: «Oh lasso,
 quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio
 menò costoro al doloroso passo!».*
*Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,
 e cominciai: «Francesca, i tuoi martiri
 a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.*
*Ma dimmi: al tempo d'i dolci sospiri,
 a che e come concedette amore*
 120 *che conosceste i dubbiosi disiri?».*
*E quella a me: «Nessun maggior dolore
 che ricordarsi del tempo felice
 ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore.*
*Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice
 del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
 dirò come colui che piange e dice.*
*Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto
 di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
 soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.*
 130 *Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse
 quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
 ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.*
*Quando leggemmo il disïato riso
 esser baciato da cotanto amante,
 questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
 la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.*
*Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
 quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante».*
*Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
 l'altro piangëa; sì che di pietade*
 140 *io venni men così com' io morisse.*
E caddi come corpo morto cade.

These words were borne across from them to us.
When I had heard those afflicted souls, I lowered
My head, and held it so till I heard the voice

100 Of the poet ask, "What are you thinking?" I answered,
"Alas—that sweet conceptions and passion so deep
Should bring them here!" Then, looking up toward

The lovers: "Francesca, your suffering makes me weep
For sorrow and pity—but tell me, in the hours
Of sweetest sighing, how and in what shape

Or manner did Love first show you those desires
So hemmed by doubt?" And she to me: "No sadness
Is greater than in misery to rehearse

Memories of joy, as your teacher well can witness.
110 But if you have so great a craving to measure
Our love's first root, I'll tell it, with the fitness

Of one who weeps and tells. One day, for pleasure,
We read of Lancelot, by love constrained:
Alone, suspecting nothing, at our leisure.

Sometimes at what we read our glances joined,
Looking from the book each to the other's eyes,
And then the color in our faces drained.

But one particular moment alone it was
Defeated us: *the longed-for smile*, it said,
120 *Was kissed by that most noble lover*: at this,

This one, who now will never leave my side,
Kissed my mouth, trembling. A Galeotto, that book!
And so was he who wrote it; that day we read

No further." All the while the one shade spoke,
The other at her side was weeping; my pity
Overwhelmed me and I felt myself go slack:

Swooning as in death, I fell like a dying body.

CANTO VI

- Al tornar de la mente, che si chiuse
dinanzi a la pietà d'i due cognati,
che di trestizia tutto mi confuse,
novi tormenti e novi tormentati
mi veggio intorno, come ch'io mi mova
e ch'io mi volga, e come che io guati.*
- Io sono al terzo cerchio, de la piovà
eterna, maladetta, fredda e greve;
regola e qualità mai non l'è nova.*
- 10 *Grandine grossa, acqua tinta e neve
per l'aere tenebroso si riversa;
pute la terra che questo riceve.*
- Cerberò, fiera crudele e diversa,
con tre gole caninamente latra
sovra la gente che quivi è sommersa.*
- Li occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta e atra,
e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani;
graffia li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra.*
- Urlar li fa la pioggia come cani;*
- 20 *de l'un de' lati fanno a l'altro schermo;
volgonsi spesso i miseri profani.*
- Quando ci scorse Cerberò, il gran vermo,
le bocche aperse e mostrocci le sanne;
non avea membro che tenesse fermo.*
- E 'l duca mio distese le sue spanne,
prese la terra, e con piene le pugna
la gittò dentro a le bramose canne.*
- Qual è quel cane ch'abbaiando agogna,
e si racqueta poi che 'l pasto morde,*
- 30 *ché solo a divorarlo intende e pugna,
cotaì si fecer quelle facce lorde
de lo demonio Cerberò, che 'ntrona
l'anime sì, ch'esser vorrebber sorde.*

CANTO VI

Upon my mind's return from swooning shut
At hearing the piteous tale of those two kin,
Which confounded me with sadness at their plight,

I see new torments and tormented ones again
Wherever I step or look. I am in the third
Circle, a realm of cold and heavy rain—

A dark, accursed torrent eternally poured
With changeless measure and nature. Enormous hail
And tainted water mixed with snow are showered

10 Steadily through the shadowy air of Hell;
The soil they drench gives off a putrid odor.
Three-headed Cerberus, monstrous and cruel,

Barks doglike at the souls immersed here, louder
For his triple throat. His eyes are red, his beard
Grease-black, he has the belly of a meat-feeder

And talons on his hands: he claws the horde
Of spirits, he flays and quarters them in the rain.
The wretches, howling like dogs where they are mired

And pelted, squirm about again and again,
20 Turning to make each side a shield for the other.
Seeing us, Cerberus made his three mouths yawn

To show the fangs—his reptile body aquiver
In all its members. My leader, reaching out
To fill both fists with as much as he could gather,

Threw gobbets of earth down each voracious throat.
Just as a barking dog grows suddenly still
The moment he begins to gnaw his meat,

Struggling and straining to devour it all,
So the foul faces of Cerberus became—
30 Who thundered so loudly at the souls in Hell

Noi passavam su per l'ombre che adona
 la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante
 sovra lor vanità che par persona.
 Elle giacean per terra tutte quante,
 fuor d'una ch'a seder si levò, ratto
 ch'ella ci vide passarsi davante.
 40 «O tu che se' per questo 'nferno tratto»,
 mi disse, «riconoscimi, se sai:
 tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto».
 E io a lui: «L'angoscia che tu hai
 forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,
 sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.
 Ma dimmi chi tu se' che 'n sì dolente
 loco se' messo, e hai sì fatta pena,
 che, s'altra è maggio, nulla è sì spiacente».
 Ed elli a me: «La tua città, ch'è piena
 50 d'invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco,
 seco mi tenne in la vita serena.
 Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciacco:
 per la dannosa colpa de la gola,
 come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco.
 E io anima trista non son sola,
 ché tutte queste a simil pena stanno
 per simil colpa». E più non fé parola.
 Io li rispuosi: «Ciacco, il tuo affanno
 mi pesa sì, ch'a lagrimar mi 'nvita;
 60 ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno
 li cittadin de la città partita;
 s'alcun v'è giusto; e dimmi la cagione
 per che l'ha tanta discordia assalita».
 E quelli a me: «Dopo lunga tencione
 verranno al sangue, e la parte selvaggia
 caccerà l'altra con molta offensione.
 Poi appresso convien che questa caggia
 infra tre soli, e che l'altra sormonti
 con la forza di tal che testé piaggia.

They wished that they were deaf. We two had come
Over the shades subdued by the heavy rain—
Treading upon their emptinesses, which seem

Like real bodies. All lay on the ground but one,
Who sat up, seeing us pass. “You who are led
Through this Hell—recognize me if you can:

You who were made before I was unmade.”
And I to him: “The anguish you endure
Perhaps effaces whatever memory I had,

40 Making it seem I have not seen you before;
But tell me who you are, assigned so sad
A station as punishment—if any is more

Agony, none is so repellent.” He said:
“Your city, so full of envy that the sack
Spills over, held me once when I enjoyed

The bright life up above. The name I took
Among you citizens was Ciacco; the sin
Of gluttony brought me here. You see me soak

To ruin in battering rain—but not alone,
50 For all of these around me share the same
Penalty for the same transgression as mine.”

Then he fell silent, but I answered him,
“Ciacco, I feel your misery; its weight
Bids me to weep. But what of things to come?—

Tell if you can the divided city’s fate,
And of the citizens: is any one just?
And tell me why such schism threatens it.”

He answered, “After long argument they must
Descend to bloodshed, and the rustic bloc
60 With much offense will expel the other first.

Then, through the power of one who while we speak
Is temporizing, that party too will fall
Within three years, the ousted coming back

- 70 *Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,
tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi,
come che di ciò pianga o che n'aonti.*
*Giusti son due, e non vi sono intesi;
superbia, invidia e avarizia sono
le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi.*
Qui puose fine al lagrimabil suono.
*E io a lui: «Ancor vo' che mi 'nsegni
e che di più parlar mi facci dono.*
Farinata e 'l Tegghiaio, che fuor sì degni,
80 *Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo e 'l Mosca
e li altri ch'a ben far puoser li 'ngegni,
dimmi ove sono e fa ch'io li conosca;
ché gran disio mi stringe di sapere
se 'l ciel li addolcia o lo 'nferno li attosca».*
*E quelli: «Ei son tra l'anime più nere;
diverse colpe giù li grava al fondo:
se tanto scendi, là i potrai vedere.*
*Ma quando tu sarai nel dolce mondo,
priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi:*
90 *più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo».*
*Li diritti occhi torse allora in biechi;
guardommi un poco e poi chinò la testa:
cadde con essa a par de li altri ciechi.*
*E 'l duca disse a me: «Più non si desta
di qua dal suon de l'angelica tromba,
quando verrà la nimica podesta:
ciascun rivederà la trista tomba,
ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,
udirà quel ch'in eterno rimbomba».*
100 *Sì trapassammo per sozza mistura
de l'ombre e de la pioggia, a passi lenti,
toccando un poco la vita futura;
per ch'io dissi: «Maestro, esti tormenti
crescerann' ei dopo la gran sentenza,
o fier minori, o saran sì cocenti?».*

With head held high; and long will they prevail
Despite the others' cries of shame and despair
Under their burdens. Only two men of all

Are truly just—whose words the rest ignore,
For the triple sparks of envy, greed, and pride
Ignite their hearts." "I'd have you tell me more,"

70 I pleaded, once his grievous words were said,
"Farinata, Mosca, Tegghiaio, men of good reason,
Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo: the good

Was their hearts' purpose in life, so tell what portion
Their souls inherit now. I long to know
If they feel Heaven's sweetness, or Infernal poison."

He said, "Their souls are among the blackest in Hell,
With different faults that weigh them to the pit.
If you descend that far you may see them all—

But pray you: when you return to earth's sweet light,
80 Recall my memory there to the human world.
Now, I respond and speak no more." With that,

His eyes went crooked and squinted, his head rolled;
He regarded me a moment, then bent his head
And fell back down with the others, blind and quelled.

"He will not wake again," my master said,
"Until the angel's conclusive trumpet sounds
And the hostile Power comes—and the waiting dead

Wake to go searching for their unhappy tombs:
And resume again the form and flesh they had,
90 And hear that which eternally resounds."

So with slow steps we traversed that place of mud
Through rain and shades commingled, once or twice
Speaking of the future life: and so I said,

"Master, these torments—tell me, will they increase
After the Judgment, or lessen, or merely endure,
Burning as much as now?" He said, "In this,

*Ed elli a me: «Ritorna a tua scienza,
che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,
più senta il bene, e così la doglienza.
Tutto che questa gente maladetta
110 in vera perfezion già mai non vada,
di là più che di qua essere aspetta».*
*Noi aggirammo a tondo quella strada,
parlando più assai ch'i' non ridico;
venimmo al punto dove si digrada:
qui vi trovammo Pluto, il gran nemico.*

Go back to your science, which teaches that the more
A creature is perfect, the more it perceives the good—
And likewise, pain. The accursèd people here

100 Can never come to true perfection; instead,
They can expect to come closer then than now.”
Traveling the course of the encircling road,

And speaking more than I repeat, we two
Continued our way, until the circuit came
To where the path descends—and there we saw

Plutus, the great Enemy, and confronted him.

- «Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!»,
 cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia;
 e quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe,
 disse per confortarmi: «Non ti nocchia
 la tua paura; ché, poder ch'elli abbia,
 non ci torrà lo scender questa roccia».
- Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfiata labbia,
 e disse: «Taci, maladetto lupo!
 consuma dentro te con la tua rabbia.
- 10 Non è senza cagion l'andare al cupo:
 vuolsi ne l'alto, là dove Michele
 fé la vendetta del superbo strupo».
- Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele
 caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca,
 tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele.
- Così scendemmo ne la quarta lacca,
 pigliando più de la dolente ripa
 che 'l mal de l'universo tutto insacca.
- Ahi giustizia di Dio! tante chi stipa
- 20 nove travaglie e pene quant' io viddi?
 e perché nostra colpa sì ne scipa?
- Come fa l'onda là sovra Cariddi,
 che si frange con quella in cui s'intoppa,
 così convien che qui la gente riddi.
- Qui vid' i' gente più ch'altrove troppa,
 e d'una parte e d'altra, con grand' urli,
 voltando pesi per forza di poppa.
- Percotëansi 'ncontro; e poscia pur lì
 si rivolgea ciascun, voltando a retro,
 30 gridando: «Perché tieni?» e «Perché burli?».
- Così tornavan per lo cerchio tetro
 da ogne mano a l'opposito punto,
 gridandosi anche loro ontoso metro;

CANTO VII

"Pape Satàn, pape Satàn, aleppe!"

Plutus began in a guttural, clucking voice.

The courteous sage who knew all reassured me:

"Don't let fear harm you; whatever power he has

Cannot prevent us climbing down this rock."

Then, turning back toward that swollen face,

He answered—"Silence, accursèd wolf! Attack

Your own insides with your devouring rage:

Bound for the pit, this is no causeless trek.

- 10 It is willed above, where Michael wreaked revenge
On pride's rebellion." Just as sails swollen with wind
As soon as the mast is snapped collapse and plunge,

That savage beast fell shrinking to the ground.

So we descended to the fourth defile

To experience more of that despondent land

That sacks up all the universe's ill.

Justice of God! Who is it that heaps together

So much peculiar torture and travail?

How is it that we choose to sin and wither?

- 20 Like waves above Charybdis, each crashing apart
Against the one it rushes to meet, here gather

People who hurry forward till they must meet

And dance their round. Here I saw more souls

Than elsewhere, spreading far to the left and right:

Each pushes a weight against his chest, and howls

At his opponent each time that they clash:

"Why do you squander?" and "Why do you hoard?" Each wheels

To roll his weight back round again: they rush

Toward the circle's opposite point, collide

- 30 Painfully once more, and curse each other afresh;

poi si volgea ciascun, quand' era giunto,
 per lo suo mezzo cerchio a l'altra giostra.
 E io, ch'avea lo cor quasi compunto,
 dissi: «Maestro mio, or mi dimostra
 che gente è questa, e se tutti fuor cherchi
 questi chercuti a la sinistra nostra».

40 Ed elli a me: «Tutti quanti fuor guerchi
 sì de la mente in la vita primaia,
 che con misura nullo spendio ferci.
 Assai la voce lor chiaro l'abbaia,
 quando vegnono a' due punti del cerchio
 dove colpa contraria li dispaia.
 Questi fuor cherchi, che non han coperchio
 piloso al capo, e papi e cardinali,
 in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio».

E io: «Maestro, tra questi cotali

50 dove' io ben riconoscere alcuni
 che furo immondi di cotesti mali».

Ed elli a me: «Vano pensiero aduni:
 la sconoscente vita che i fé sozzi,
 ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.
 In eterno verranno a li due cozzi:
 questi resurgeranno del sepulcro
 col pugno chiuso, e questi coi crin mozzi.
 Mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro
 ha tolto loro, e posti a questa zuffa:

60 qual ella sia, parole non ci appulcro.
 Or puoi, figliuol, veder la corta buffa
 d'i ben che son commessi a la fortuna,
 per che l'umana gente si rabuffa;
 ché tutto l'oro ch'è sotto la luna
 e che già fu, di quest' anime stanche
 non potrebbe farne posare una».

«Maestro mio», diss' io, «or mi di anche:
 questa fortuna di che tu mi tocche,
 che è, che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche?»

70 E quelli a me: «Oh creature sciocche,
 quanta ignoranza è quella che v'offende!
 Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne 'mbocche.

And after that refrain each one must head
Through his half-circle again, to his next joust.
My own heart pained by those collisions, I said:

“Who are these, Master?—and are the shades who contest
Here on our left all clergy, with tonsured head?”
He answered: “Every one of the shades here massed

In the first life had a mind so squinty-eyed
That in his spending he heeded no proportion—
A fact they bark out plainly when they collide

40 At the circle’s facing points, that mark division
Between opposite faults. Those bare of head
Were clerics, cardinals, popes, in whom the passion

Of avarice has wrought excess.” I said,
“Among these, Master, I’m sure I’ll recognize
Some who were thus polluted.” He replied,

“The thought you hold is vain: just as the ways
That made these souls so foul were undiscerning,
So they are dim to discernment in this place.

Here they will keep eternally returning
50 To the two butting places: from the grave
These will arise fists closed; and those, pates shining.

Wrongness in how to give and how to have
Took the fair world from them and brought them this,
Their ugly brawl, which words need not retrieve.

Now you can see, my son, how ludicrous
And brief are all the goods in Fortune’s ken,
Which humankind contend for: you see from this

How all the gold there is beneath the moon,
Or that there ever was, could not relieve
60 One of these weary souls.” I: “Master, say then

What is this Fortune you mention, that it should have
The world’s goods in its grip?” He: “Foolish creatures,
How great an ignorance plagues you. May you receive

Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,
 fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce
 sì, ch'ogne parte ad ogni parte splende,
 distribuendo igualmente la luce.
 Similmente a li splendor mondani
 ordinò general ministra e duce
 che permutasse a tempo li ben vani
 80 di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
 oltre la difension d'i senni umani;
 per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,
 seguendo lo giudicio di costei,
 che è occulto come in erba l'angue.
 Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:
 questa provvede, giudica, e persegue
 suo regno come il loro li altri dèi.
 Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue:
 necessità la fa esser veloce;
 90 sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.
 Quest' è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce
 pur da color che le dovrien dar lode,
 dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce;
 ma ella s'è beata e ciò non ode:
 con l'altre prime creature lieta
 volge sua spera e beata si gode.
 Or discendiamo omai a maggior pietà;
 già ogni stella cade che saliva
 quand' io mi mossi, e 'l troppo star si vieta».

100 Noi ricidemmo il cerchio a l'altra riva
 sovr' una fonte che bolle e riversa
 per un fossato che da lei deriva.
 L'acqua era buia assai più che persa;
 e noi, in compagnia de l'onde bige,
 intrammo giù per una via diversa.
 In la palude va c'ha nome Stige
 questo tristo ruscel, quand' è disceso
 al piè de le maligne piagge grige.

My teaching: He who made all of Heaven's features
In His transcendent wisdom gave them guides
So each part shines on all the others, all nature's

Illumination apportioned. So too, for goods
Of worldly splendor He assigned a guide
And minister—she, when time seems proper, spreads

70 Those vanities from race to race, this blood
Then that, beyond prevention of human wit.
Thus one clan languishes for another's good

According to how her judgment may dictate—
Which is invisible, like a snake in grass.
Your wisdom cannot resist her; in her might

Fortune, like any other god, foresees,
Judges, and rules her appointed realm. No truces
Can stop her turning. Necessity decrees

80 That she be swift, and so men change their places
In rapid permutation. She is cursed
Too often by those who ought to sing her praises,

Wrongfully blamed and defamed. But she is blest,
And does not hear it; happy among the choir
Of other primal creatures, she too is placed

In bliss, rejoicing as she turns her sphere.
Now we descend to greater wretchedness:
Already every star that was rising higher

When I set out is sinking, and long delays
Have been forbidden us." We traveled across
90 To the circle's farther edge, above the place

Where a foaming spring spills over into a fosse.
The water was purple-black; we followed its current
Down a strange passage. This dismal watercourse

Descends the grayish slopes until its torrent
Discharges into the marsh whose name is Styx.
Gazing intently, I saw there were people warren'd

E io, che di mirare stava inteso,
 110 vidi genti fangose in quel pantano,
 ignude tutte, con sembiante offeso.
 Queste si percotean non pur con mano,
 ma con la testa e col petto e coi piedi,
 troncandosi co' denti a brano a brano.
 Lo buon maestro disse: «Figlio, or vedi
 l'anime di color cui vinse l'ira;
 e anche vo' che tu per certo credi
 che sotto l'acqua è gente che sospira,
 e fanno pullular quest' acqua al summo,
 120 come l'occhio ti dice, u' che s'aggira.
 Fitti nel limo dicon: "Tristi fummo
 ne l'aere dolce che dal sol s'allegra,
 portando dentro accidioso fummo:
 or ci attristiam ne la belletta negra".
 Quest' inno si gorgoglian ne la strozza,
 ché dir nol posson con parola integra».

Così girammo de la lorda pozza
 grand' arco, tra la ripa secca e 'l mézzo,
 con li occhi vòlti a chi del fango ingozza.
 130 Venimmo al piè d'una torre al da sezzo.

Within that bog, all naked and muddy—with looks
Of fury, striking each other: with a hand
But also with their heads, chests, feet, and backs,

100 Teeth tearing piecemeal. My kindly master explained:
“These are the souls whom anger overcame,
My son; know also, that under the water are found

Others, whose sighing makes these bubbles come
That pock the surface everywhere you look.
Lodged in the slime they say: ‘Once we were grim

And sullen in the sweet air above, that took
A further gladness from the play of sun;
Inside us, we bore acedia’s dismal smoke.

We have this black mire now to be sullen in.’
110 This canticle they gargle from the craw,
Unable to speak whole words.” We traveled on

Through a great arc of swamp between that slough
And the dry bank—all the while with eyes
Turned toward those who swallow the muck below;

And then at length we came to a tower’s base.

- Io dico, seguitando, ch'assai prima
 che noi fossimo al piè de l'alta torre,
 li occhi nostri n'andar suso a la cima
 per due fiammette che i vedemmo porre,
 e un'altra da lungi render cenno,
 tanto ch'a pena il potea l'occhio tòrre.
 E io mi volsi al mar di tutto 'l senno;
 dissi: «Questo che dice? e che risponde
 quell' altro foco? e chi son quei che 'l fenno?».
 10 Ed elli a me: «Su per le sucide onde
 già scorgere puoi quello che s'aspetta,
 se 'l fummo del pantan nol ti nasconde».
- Corda non pinse mai da sé saetta
 che sì corresse via per l'aere snella,
 com' io vidi una nave piccioletta
 venir per l'acqua verso noi in quella,
 sotto 'l governo d'un sol galeoto,
 che gridava: «Or se' giunta, anima fella!».
 «Flegiàs, Flegiàs, tu gridi a vòto»,
 20 disse lo mio signore, «a questa volta:
 più non ci avrai che sol passando il loto».
- Qual è colui che grande inganno ascolta
 che li sia fatto, e poi se ne rammarca,
 fecesi Flegiàs ne l'ira accolta.
 Lo duca mio discese ne la barca,
 e poi mi fece intrare appresso lui;
 e sol quand' io fui dentro parve carca.
 Tosto che 'l duca e io nel legno fui,
 segando se ne va l'antica prora
 30 de l'acqua più che non suol con altrui.
 Mentre noi corravam la morta gora,
 dinanzi mi si fece un pien di fango,
 e disse: «Chi se' tu che vieni anzi ora?».

CANTO VIII

Continuing, I tell how for some time
Before we reached the lofty tower's base
Our eyes were following two points of flame

Visible at the top; and answering these
Another returned the signal, so far away
The eye could barely catch it. I turned to face

My sea of knowledge and said, "O Master, say:
What does this beacon mean? And the other fire—
What answer does it signal? And who are they

10 Who set it there?" He said: "It should be clear:
Over these fetid waves, you can perceive
What is expected—if this atmosphere

Of marsh fumes doesn't hide it." Bow never drove
Arrow through air so quickly as then came
Skimming across the water a little skiff

Guided by a single boatman at the helm:
"Now, evil soul," he cried out, "you are caught!"
"Phlegyas, Phlegyas—you roar in vain this time,"

My lord responded. "You'll have us in your boat
20 Only as long as it takes to cross the fen."
Like one convinced that he has been the butt

Of gross deception, and bursting to complain,
Phlegyas held his wrath. We boarded the boat,
My leader first—it bobbed without a sign

Of being laden until it carried my weight.
As soon as we embarked, the ancient prow
Turned swiftly from shore; it made a deeper cut

Into the water than it was wont to do
With others. In the dead channel one rose abeam
30 Coated with mud, and addressed me: "Who are you,

E io a lui: «S'i' vegno, non rimango;
 ma tu chi se', che sì se' fatto brutto?».

Rispuose: «Vedi che son un che piango».

E io a lui: «Con piangere e con lutto,
 spirito maladetto, ti rimani;
 ch'i' ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto».

40 Allor distese al legno ambo le mani;
 per che 'l maestro accorto lo sospinse,
 dicendo: «Via costà con li altri cani!».

Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse;
 basciommi 'l volto e disse: «Alma sdegnosa,
 benedetta colei che 'n te s'incinse!

Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa;
 bontà non è che sua memoria fregi:
 così s'è l'ombra sua qui furiosa.

Quanti sì tegnon or là sù gran regi
 50 che qui staranno come porci in brago,
 di sé lasciando orribili dispregi!».

E io: «Maestro, molto sarei vago
 di vederlo attuffare in questa broda
 prima che noi uscissimo del lago».

Ed elli a me: «Avante che la proda
 ti si lasci veder, tu sarai sazio:
 di tal disìo convien che tu goda».

Dopo ciò poco vid' io quello strazio
 far di costui a le fangose genti,
 60 che Dio ancor ne lodo e ne ringrazio.

Tutti gridavano: «A Filippo Argenti!»;
 e 'l fiorentino spirito bizzarro
 in sé medesimo si volvea co' denti.

Quivi il lasciammo, che più non ne narro;
 ma ne l'orecchie mi percosse un duolo,
 per ch'io avante l'occhio intento sbarro.

To come here before your time?" And I to him:
"Although I come, I do not come to remain—"
Then added, "Who are you, who have become

So brutally foul?" "You see me: I am one
Who weeps," he answered. And I to him, "In weeping
And sorrow remain, cursed soul—for I have seen

Through all that filth: I know you!" He started gripping
With both hands at the boat. My master stood
And thrust him back off, saying, "Back to safekeeping

40 Among the other dogs." And then my guide
Embraced my neck and kissed me on the face
And said, "Indignant soul, blessed indeed

Is she who bore you. Arrogant in his vice
Was that one when he lived. No goodness whatever
Adorning his memory, his shade is furious.

In the world above, how many a self-deceiver
Now counting himself a mighty king will sprawl
Swinelike amid the mire when life is over,

Leaving behind a name that men revile."
50 And I said, "Master, truly I should like
To see that spirit pickled in this swill,

Before we've made our way across the lake."
And he to me: "Before we see the shore,
You will be satisfied, for what you seek

Is fitting." After a little, I saw him endure
Fierce mangling by the people of the mud—
A sight I give God thanks and praises for:

"Come get Filippo Argenti!" they all cried,
And crazed with rage the Florentine spirit bit
60 At his own body. Let no more be said

Of him, but that we left him still beset;
New cries of lamentation reached my ear,
And I leaned forward to peer intently out.

Lo buon maestro disse: «Omai, figliuolo,
 s'appressa la città c'ha nome Dite,
 coi gravi cittadin, col grande stuolo».

70 E io: «Maestro, già le sue meschite
 là entro certe ne la valle cerno,
 vermiglie come se di foco uscite
 fossero». Ed ei mi disse: «Il foco eterno
 ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse,
 come tu vedi in questo basso inferno».

Noi pur giugnemmo dentro a l'alte fosse
 che vallan quella terra sconsolata:
 le mura mi parean che ferro fosse.

Non sanza prima far grande aggirata,
 80 venimmo in parte dove il nocchier forte
 «Usciteci», gridò: «qui è l'intrata».

Io vidi più di mille in su le porte
 da ciel piovuti, che stizzosamente
 dicean: «Chi è costui che sanza morte
 va per lo regno de la morta gente?».

E 'l savio mio maestro fece segno
 di voler lor parlar segretamente.

Allor chiusero un poco il gran disdegno
 e disser: «Vien tu solo, e quei sen vada
 90 che sì ardito intrò per questo regno.

Sol si ritorni per la folle strada:
 pruovi, se sa; ché tu qui rimarrai,
 che li ha' iscorta sì buia contrada».

Pensa, lettor, se io mi sconfortai
 nel suon de le parole maladette,
 ché non credetti ritornarci mai.

«O caro duca mio, che più di sette
 volte m'hai sicurtà renduta e tratto
 d'alto periglio che 'ncontra mi stette,
 100 non mi lasciar», diss' io, «così disfatto;
 e se 'l passar più oltre ci è negato,
 ritroviam l'orme nostre insieme ratto».

My kindly master said, "A city draws near
Whose name is Dis, of solemn citizenry
And mighty garrison." I: "Already clear

Are mosques—I see them there within the valley,
Baked red as though just taken from the fire."
And he, "It is fire blazing eternally

70 Inside of them that makes them so appear
Within this nether Hell." We had progressed
Into the deep-dug moats that circle near

The walls of that bleak city, which seemed cast
Of solid iron; we journeyed on, to complete
An immense circuit before we reached at last

A place where the boatman shouted, "Now get out!
Here is the entrance." Above the gates I saw
More than a thousand of those whom Heaven had spat

80 Like rain, all raging: "Who is this, who'd go
Without death through the kingdom of the dead?"
And my wise master made a sign, to show

That he desired to speak with them aside.
And then they tempered their great disdain a bit,
Answering: "You, by yourself, may come inside;

But let that other depart, who dares set foot
Within this kingdom. Let him retrace alone
His foolish way—try if he can!—and let

90 You remain here, who have guided such a one
Over terrain so dark." You judge, O reader,
If I did not lose heart, or believe then,

Hearing that cursèd voice, that I would never
Return from there. "O my dear guide," I said,
"Who has restored my confidence seven times over,

And drawn me out of peril—stay at my side,
Do not desert me now like this, undone.
If we can go no farther, let us instead

E quel signor che lì m'avea menato,
 mi disse: «Non temer; ché 'l nostro passo
 non ci può tòrre alcun: da tal n'è dato.
 Ma qui m'attendi, e lo spirito lasso
 conforta e ciba di speranza buona,
 ch'i' non ti lascerò nel mondo basso».

Così sen va, e quivi m'abbandona
 110 lo dolce padre, e io rimagno in forse,
 che sì e no nel capo mi tenciona.
 Udir non potti quello ch'a lor porse;
 ma ei non stette là con essi guari,
 che ciascun dentro a pruova si ricorse.
 Chiuser le porte que' nostri avversari
 nel petto al mio signor, che fuor rimase
 e rivolsesi a me con passi rari.

Li occhi a la terra e le ciglia avea rase
 d'ogne baldanza, e dicea ne' sospiri:
 120 «Chi m'ha negate le dolenti case!».

E a me disse: «Tu, perch' io m'adiri,
 non sbigottir, ch'io vincerò la prova,
 qual ch'a la difension dentro s'aggiri.
 Questa lor tracotanza non è nova;
 ché già l'usaro a men segreta porta,
 la qual senza serrame ancor si trova.
 Sovr' essa vedestù la scritta morta:
 e già di qua da lei discende l'erta,
 passando per li cerchi senza scorta,
 130 tal che per lui ne fia la terra aperta».

Retrace our steps together.” That nobleman
Who led me there then told me, “Do not fear:
None can deprive us of the passage One

100 Has willed for us to have. Wait for me here
And feed your spirit hope and comfort: remember,
I won’t abandon you in this nether sphere.”

So he goes away and leaves me, the gentle father,
While I remain in doubt, with yes and no
Vying in my head. What they discussed together

Or what my guide proposed, I do not know,
For they were out of hearing. Before much time,
The demons scrambled back, where we would go—

And then I saw our adversaries slam
110 The portals of the entrance in the face
Of my master, who remained outside and came

Back to me walking slowly, with downcast eyes.
His brow devoid of confidence, he said,
“Who has denied me this abode of sighs?”

And then he said to me, “Don’t be dismayed
By my vexation: I will conquer this crew,
However they contrive to block our road.

This insolence of theirs is nothing new;
At a less secret gate they’ve shown it before,
120 One still unbolted and open, as you know:

You read the deadly inscription that it bore.
Already on this side of it—down the steep pass,
Passing the circles without an escort—be sure

Someone is coming to open the city to us.”

- Quel color che viltà di fuor mi pinse
 veggendo il duca mio tornare in volta,
 più tosto dentro il suo novo ristrinse.
 Attento si fermò com' uom ch'ascolta;
 ché l'occhio nol potea menare a lunga
 per l'aere nero e per la nebbia folta.
 «Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga»,
 cominciò el, «se non . . . Tal ne s'offerse.
 Oh quanto tarda a me ch'altri qui giunga!»,
 10 *I' vidi ben sì com' ei ricoperse
 lo cominciar con l'altro che poi venne,
 che fur parole a le prime diverse;
 ma nondimen paura il suo dir dienne,
 perch' io traeva la parola tronca
 forse a peggior sentenza che non tenne.
 «In questo fondo de la trista conca
 discende mai alcun del primo grado,
 che sol per pena ha la speranza cionca?».
 Questa question fec' io; e quei «Di rado
 20 *incontra», mi rispuose, «che di noi
 faccia il cammino alcun per qual io vado.
 Ver è ch'altra fiata qua giù fui,
 congiurato da quella Eritòn cruda
 che richiamava l'ombre a' corpi sui.
 Di poco era di me la carne nuda,
 ch'ella mi fece intrar dentr' a quel muro,
 per trarne un spirto del cerchio di Giuda.
 Quell' è 'l più basso loco e 'l più oscuro,
 e 'l più lontan dal ciel che tutto gira:
 30 *ben so 'l cammin; però ti fa sicuro.****

The outward color cowardice painted me
 When I beheld my leader turning back
 Repressed his own new pallor more hurriedly.

He paused with an attentive air, but like
 One listening, not watching—for the eye
 Saw little in air so dark and fog so thick.

“We have to win this battle,” he started to say,
 “Or else . . . and she, who offered so much aid—
 Late though it seems to be, and still on the way.”

10 I could see plainly how he strove to hide
 His sentence’s beginning with its close,
 In different words from those he would have said—

Scaring me none the less, each broken phrase
 Leading me to a meaning perhaps much worse
 Than any it held. “Does anyone whose place

Is the first circle, where the only curse
 Is having no hope, ever come down so far
 As this grim hollow?” I asked him. “Such a course,”

He said, “is rare among us, though once before
 20 I have been down here—beckoned as a shade
 By wicked Erichtho, the conjuror

Who used to summon spirits of the dead
 Back to their bodies. My own flesh was but still
 A little while denuded of my shade,

The time she made me enter within this wall
 To draw a spirit from the circle of Judas—
 Which is the lowest and darkest place of all,

And farthest from the heaven whose dome encloses
 Everything in creation. I know the way:
 30 Be sure of that. This quagmire which produces

Questa palude che 'l gran puzzo spira
 cigne dintorno la città dolente,
 u' non potemo intrare omai sanz' ira».

E altro disse, ma non l'ho a mente;
 però che l'occhio m'avea tutto tratto
 ver' l'alta torre a la cima rovente,
 dove in un punto furon dritte ratto
 tre furie infernal di sangue tinte,
 che membra feminine avieno e atto,

40 e con idre verdissime eran cinte;
 serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine,
 onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte.

E quei, che ben conobbe le meschine
 de la regina de l'eterno pianto,
 «Guarda», mi disse, «le feroci Erine.

Quest' è Megera dal sinistro canto;
 quella che piange dal destro è Aletto;
 Tesifón è nel mezzo»; e tacque a tanto.

Con l'unghie si fendea ciascuna il petto;
 50 battiensi a palme e gridavan sì alto,
 ch'ì' mi strinsi al poeta per sospetto.

«Vegna Medusa: sì 'l farem di smalto»,
 dicevan tutte riguardando in giuso;
 «mal non vengiammo in Tesëo l'assalto».

«Volgiti 'n dietro e tien lo viso chiuso;
 ché se 'l Gorgón si mostra e tu 'l vedessi,
 nulla sarebbe di tornar mai suso».

Così disse 'l maestro; ed elli stessi
 mi volse, e non si tenne a le mie mani,
 60 che con le sue ancor non mi chiudessi.

O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani,
 mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
 sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.

E già venia su per le torbide onde
 un fracasso d'un suon, pien di spavento,
 per cui tremavano amendue le sponde,
 non altrimenti fatto che d'un vento
 impetüoso per li avversi ardori,
 che fier la selva e sanz' alcun rattento

70 li rami schianta, abbatte e porta fori;
 dinanzi polveroso va superbo,
 e fa fuggir le fiere e li pastori.

So strong a stench surrounds the city of woe
We cannot enter now except with wrath."
And he said more that I don't remember now—

My eyes were on the tower we stood beneath,
For at its glowing top three hellish Furies
Suddenly appeared: like women, but with a wreath

Of bright green hydras girdled about their bodies,
Bloodstained, with squirming vipers in a crown
Fringing their savage temples. "The fierce Erinyes,"

40 He said, who knew those handmaids of the queen
Of eternal sorrows: "Megaera on the left;
Alecto howls on the right; and in between,

Tisiphone." Each one was clawing her breast,
And each was beating herself—and screamed so loud
I pressed against him, flinching at the blast.

"O let Medusa come," the Furies bayed
As they looked down, "to make him stone! We grieve
Not avenging the assault of Theseus!" He said,

50 "Turn your back; close your eyes: should Gorgon arrive
And show herself, then if you looked at her—
There would be no returning back above."

He turned me around himself, and to make sure,
Not trusting mine alone he covered my face
With his hands too. O you whose mind is clear:

Understand well the lesson that underlies
The veil of these strange verses I have written.
Across the turbid waves now came the noise

Of a fearsome crash, by which both shores were shaken:
A sound like that of a wind that gathers force
60 From waves of heat in violent collision

And batters the forest, and on its unchecked course
Shatters the branches and tears them to the ground
And sweeps them off in dustclouds, with scornful roars,

Li occhi mi sciolse e disse: «Or drizza il nerbo
 del viso su per quella schiuma antica
 per indi ove quel fummo è più acerbo».
 Come le rane innanzi a la nimica
 biscia per l'acqua si dileguan tutte,
 fin ch'a la terra ciascuna s'abbica,
 vid' io più di mille anime distrutte
 80 fuggir così dinanzi ad un ch'al passo
 passava Stige con le piante asciutte.
 Dal volto removea quell' aere grasso,
 menando la sinistra innanzi spesso;
 e sol di quell' angoscia pareva lasso.
 Ben m'accorsi ch'elli era da ciel messo,
 e volsimi al maestro; e quei fé segno
 ch'i' stessi queto ed inchinassi ad esso.
 Ahi quanto mi pareva pien di disdegno!
 Venne a la porta e con una verghetta
 90 l'aperse, che non v'ebbe alcun ritegno.
 «O cacciati del ciel, gente dispetta»,
 cominciò elli in su l'orribil soglia,
 «ond' esta oltracotanza in voi s'alletta?»
 Perché recalcitrate a quella voglia
 a cui non puote il fin mai esser mozzo,
 e che più volte v'ha cresciuta doglia?
 Che giova ne le fata dar di cozzo?
 Cerbero vostro, se ben vi ricorda,
 ne porta ancor pelato il mento e 'l gozzo».
 100 Poi si rivolse per la strada lorda,
 e non fé motto a noi, ma fé sembiante
 d'omo cui altra cura stringa e morda
 che quella di colui che li è davante;
 e noi movemmo i piedi inver' la terra,
 sicuri appresso le parole sante.
 Dentro li 'ntrammo sanz' alcuna guerra;
 e io, ch'avea di riguardar disio
 la condizion che tal fortezza serra,

And the wild beasts and shepherds flee at the sound.
Taking his hands from my eyes, he said, "Now look:
There where the very harshest fumes abound,

Across the ancient scum." As frogs are quick
To vanish through water and hunch on bottom sand
As soon as they see their enemy the snake,

70 So I saw more than a thousand souls of the ruined
Flee before one who strode across the Styx
Dry-shod as though on land. With his left hand

He cleared the polluted air before his face
And only in that annoyance did he seem tired.
I knew assuredly he was sent to us

From Heaven, and I turned my head to regard
The master—who signaled that I should be mute
And bow before him. Ah, to me he appeared

80 So full of high disdain! He went to the gate
And opened it by means of a little wand,
And there was no resistance. "O race cast out

From Heaven, exiles despised there," he intoned
From that grim threshold, "Why this insolence?
Why do you kick against that Will whose end

Cannot be thwarted, and whose punishments
Many times over have increased your pain?
What use to butt at what the fates dispense?

Remember, your Cerberus's throat and chin,
For just this reason, still are stripped of fur."
90 Then he turned back on the filthy path again,

Not speaking a word to us, but with the air
Of one whom other matters must concern
Than those who stand before him. And so, secure

After those holy words, we in our turn
Stepped forward toward the city and through the gate,
Entering without dispute. Anxious to learn

com' io fui dentro, l'occhio intorno invio:
 110 e veggio ad ogni man grande campagna,
 piena di duolo e di tormento rio.
 Sì come ad Arli, ove Rodano stagna,
 sì com' a Pola, presso del Carnaro
 ch'Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna,
 fanno i sepulcri tutt' il loco varo,
 così facevan quivi d'ogne parte,
 salvo che 'l modo v'era più amaro;
 ché tra li avelli fiamme erano sparte,
 per le quali eran sì del tutto accesi,
 120 che ferro più non chiede verun' arte.
 Tutti li lor coperchi eran sospesi,
 e fuor n'uscivan sì duri lamenti,
 che ben parean di miseri e d'offesi.
 E io: «Maestro, quai son quelle genti
 che, seppellite dentro da quell' arche,
 si fan sentir coi sospiri dolenti?».
 E quelli a me: «Qui son li eresiarche
 con lor seguaci, d'ogne setta, e molto
 più che non credi son le tombe carche.
 130 Simile qui con simile è sepolto,
 e i monimenti son più e men caldi».
 E poi ch'a la man destra si fu vòlto,
 passammo tra i martiri e li alti spaldi.

What their condition was who populate
A fortress so guarded, I cast my eye around
As soon as I was in—and saw a great

100 Plain filled with woe and torment. As on the land
At Arles where the river Rhône grows more subdued,
Or at Pola where the Quarnero sets a bound

For Italy, bathing her borders, on every side
The ground is made uneven by the tombs—
So it was here: but these were of a mode

More bitter, for among the graves were flames
That made the sepulchers glow with fiercer heat
Than a smith could need. Among these catacombs

110 The lids were raised, with sounds of woe so great
Those within surely suffered horrible pain.
“Master,” I said, “who are these people that are shut

Ensepulchered within these coffers of stone,
Making their sounds of anguish from inside?”
He answered, “Here, arch-heretics lie—and groan

Along with all the converts that they made,
The followers of every sect, with like
Entombed with like. A greater multitude

Crowds into these graves than you may think they take.
Some sepulchers grow hotter, and some less.”
120 He turned to the right, and we continued to walk

Between the anguish and the high parapets.

- Ora sen va per un secreto calle,
 tra 'l muro de la terra e li martiri,
 lo mio maestro, e io dopo le spalle.
 «O virtù somma, che per li empi giri
 mi volvi», cominciài, «com' a te piace,
 parlami, e sodisfammi a' miei disiri.
 La gente che per li sepolcri giace
 potrebbesi veder? già son levati
 tutt' i coperchi, e nessun guardia face».
- 10 E quelli a me: «Tutti saran serrati
 quando di Iosafât qui torneranno
 coi corpi che là sù hanno lasciati.
 Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno
 con Epicuro tutti suoi seguaci,
 che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.
 Però a la dimanda che mi faci
 quinc' entro satisfatto. sarà tosto,
 e al disio ancor che tu mi taci».
- E io: «Buon duca, non tegno riposto
 20 a te mio cuor se non per dicer poco,
 e tu m'hai non pur mo a ciò disposto».
- «O Tosco che per la città del foco
 vivo ten vai così parlando onesto,
 piacciati di restare in questo loco.
 La tua loquela ti fa manifesto
 di quella nobil patria natio,
 a la qual forse fui troppo molesto».
- Subitamente questo suono uscìo
 d'una de l'arche; però m'accostai,
 30 temendo, un poco più al duca mio.
 Ed el mi disse: «Volgiti! Che fai?
 Vedi là Farinata che s'è dritto:
 da la cintola in sù tutto 'l vedrai».

CANTO X

And now, along the narrow pathway that ran
Between those tortures and the city wall,
I followed my master. "O matchless power," I began,

"Who lead me through evil's circles at your will,
Speak to me with the answers that I crave
About these souls and the sepulchers they fill:

Might they be seen? The cover of each grave
Is lifted open, and no one is on guard."
"When they return from Jehoshaphat above,"

10 He answered, "bearing the bodies that they had,
All shall be closed. Here Epicurus lies
With all his followers, who call the soul dead

When the flesh dies. The question that you raise
Will soon be answered now that we are inside—
And so will the secret wish you don't express."

I said, "Dear guide, believe me: I do not hide
My heart from you, except through my intention
To speak but little, the way that you have said

20 Earlier I ought to be disposed." "O Tuscan!—
Who travel alive through this, the city of fire,
While speaking in so courteous a fashion—

If it should please you, stop a moment here.
Your way of speaking shows that you were born
In the same noble fatherland: there where

I possibly have wrought excessive harm."
This sound erupted from a coffer of stone—
I drew back toward my guide in my alarm.

30 "What are you doing?" he said. "Go back again!
And see where Farinata has sat up straight;
From the waist up, you may behold the man."

Io avea già il mio viso nel suo fitto;
 ed el s'ergea col petto e con la fronte
 com' avesse l'inferno a gran dispetto.
 E l'animose man del duca e pronte
 mi pinser tra le sepolture a lui,
 dicendo: «Le parole tue sien conte».

40 Com' io al piè de la sua tomba fui,
 guardommi un poco, e poi, quasi sdegnoso,
 mi dimandò: «Chi fuor li maggior tui?».

Io ch'era d'ubidir disideroso,
 non gliel celai, ma tutto gliel' apersi;
 ond' ei levò le ciglia un poco in suso;
 poi disse: «Fieramente furo avversi
 a me e a miei primi e a mia parte,
 sì che per due fiate li dispersi».

«S'ei fur cacciati, ei tornar d'ogne parte»,
 50 rispuos' io lui, «l'una e l'altra fiata;
 ma i vostri non appreser ben quell'arte».

Allor surse a la vista scoperchiata
 un'ombra, lungo questa, infino al mento:
 credo che s'era in ginocchie levata.

Dintorno mi guardò, come talento
 avesse di veder s'altri era meco;
 e poi che 'l sospecciar fu tutto spento,
 piangendo disse: «Se per questo cieco
 carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,
 60 mio figlio ov' è? e perché non è teco?».

E io a lui: «Da me stesso non vegno:
 colui ch'attende là, per qui mi mena
 forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno».

Le sue parole e 'l modo de la pena
 m'avean di costui già letto il nome;
 però fu la risposta così piena.

Di subito drizzato gridò: «Come
 dicesti? elli ebbe? non viv' elli ancora?
 non fiere li occhi suoi lo dolce lume?»

Already my eyes were on his: he sat upright,
And seemed by how he bore his chest and brow
To have great scorn for Hell. My leader set

Firm hands upon me at once, and made me go
Forward between the rows of sepulchers,
Saying: "Choose fitting words," as we wended through.

At his tomb's foot, I felt his proud gaze pierce
Mine for a moment; and then as if in disdain
He spoke and asked me, "Who were your ancestors?"

40 Eager to comply with that, I made all plain,
Concealing nothing: whereupon he raised
His brows a little. Then he said, "These men

Were enemies to me; they fiercely opposed
Me and my forebears and my party—so, twice,
I scattered them." "If ousted and abused,"

I answered, "they returned to claim their place
From every quarter: yours have not learned that art
Of return so well." Then suddenly the face

50 Of a shade appeared beside him, showing the part
From the chin up—I think through having risen
Erect on his knees: his gaze began to dart

Anxiously round me, as though in expectation
Of someone with me. But when that hope was gone
He wept: "If you can journey through this blind prison

By virtue of high genius—where is my son,
And why is he not with you?" And my rejoinder:
"My own strength has not brought me, but that of one

Who guides me through here, and is waiting yonder—
Toward one your Guido perhaps had scorned." I well
60 Deduced his name from his words and from his manner

Of punishment, and thus could answer in full.
Suddenly straightening up, the shade cried out,
"What?—did I hear you say he 'had'? Oh tell:

- 70 Quando s'accorse d'alcuna dimora
ch'io facëa dinanzi a la risposta,
supin ricadde e più non parve fora.
Ma quell' altro magnanimo, a cui posta
restato m'era, non mutò aspetto,
né mosse collo, né piegò sua costa;
e sé continüando al primo detto,
«S'elli han quell' arte», disse, «male appresa,
ciò mi tormenta più che questo letto.
Ma non cinquanta volte fia raccesa
80 la faccia de la donna che qui regge,
che tu saprai quanto quell' arte pesa.
E se tu mai nel dolce mondo regge,
dimmi: perché quel popolo è sì empio
incontr' a' miei in ciascuna sua legge?».
Ond' io a lui: «Lo strazio e 'l grande scempio
che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso,
tal orazion fa far nel nostro tempio».
Poi ch'ebbe sospirando il capo mosso,
«A ciò non fu' io sol», disse, «né certo
90 senza cagion con li altri sarei mosso.
Ma fu' io solo, là dove sofferto
fu per ciascun di tòrre via Fiorenza,
colui che la difesi a viso aperto».
«Deh, se riposi mai vostra semenza»,
prega' io lui, «solvetemi quel nodo
che qui ha 'nviluppata mia sentenza.
El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo,
dinanzi quel che 'l tempo seco adduce,
e nel presente tenete altro modo».
100 «Noi veggiam, come quei c'ha mala luce,
le cose», disse, «che ne son lontano;
cotanto ancor ne splende il sommo duce.
Quando s'appressano o son, tutto è vano
nostro intelletto; e s'altri non ci apporta,
nulla sapem di vostro stato umano.

Is he not still alive? Does the sweet light
Not strike his eyes?" Perceiving my delay
In giving any answer, he fell back flat,

Face upward, appearing no more. But not so he,
The great soul at whose beckoning I had paused;
He did not change his features in any way,

70 Nor bend his neck or waist. "The point you raised—"
He resumed where interrupted: "My kin not good
At learning that art—I feel more agonized

By that accursèd fact than by this bed.
But when the Lady's face who rules this place
Has kindled fewer than fifty times," he said,

"Then you will know how heavy that art weighs.
Now tell me (may you regain the sweet world's vantage),
Why is that people so fierce in its decrees

Toward my kin?" I answered, "It was the carnage
80 And devastation that dyed the Arbia red
Which made the prayers in our temple savage."

Shaking his head, "I was not alone," he sighed.
"And surely I would not have chosen to join
The others without some cause, but where all agreed

To level Florence—there, I was alone:
One, who defended her before them all."
"Ah, pray you (so may your seed find peace again)

Unravel a knot that makes my reason fail,"
I said. "If I hear rightly, you seem to foresee
90 What time will bring, and yet you seem to deal

Differently with the present." He answered me:
"Like someone with faulty vision, we can behold
Remote things well, for so much light does He

Who rules supreme still grant us; but we are foiled
When things draw near us, and our intelligence
Is useless when they are present. So of your world

Però comprender puoi che tutta morta
 fia nostra conoscenza da quel punto
 che del futuro fia chiusa la porta».

Allor, come di mia colpa compunto,
 110 dissi: «Or direte dunque a quel caduto
 che 'l suo nato è co' vivi ancor congiunto;
 e s'i' fui, dianzi, a la risposta muto,
 fate i saper che 'l fei perché pensava
 già ne l'error che m'avete soluto».

E già 'l maestro mio mi richiamava;
 per ch'i' pregai lo spirto più avaccio
 che mi dicesse chi con lu' istava.

Disse mi: «Qui con più di mille giaccio:
 qua dentro è 'l secondo Federico
 120 e 'l Cardinale; e de li altri mi taccio».

Indi s'ascose; e io inver' l'antico
 poeta volsi i passi, ripensando
 a quel parlar che mi pareva nemico.

Elli si mosse; e poi, così andando,
 mi disse: «Perché se' tu sì smarrito?».

E io li sodisfeci al suo dimando.

«La mente tua conservi quel ch'udito
 hai contra te», mi comandò quel saggio;
 «e ora attendi qui», e drizzò 'l dito:

130 «quando sarai dinanzi al dolce raggio
 di quella il cui bell' occhio tutto vede,
 da lei saprai di tua vita il viaggio».

Appresso mosse a man sinistra il piede:
 lasciammo il muro e gimmo inver' lo mezzo
 per un sentier ch'a una valle fiede,
 che 'nfin là sù facea spiacer suo lezzo.

In its present state, we have no evidence
Or knowledge, except if others bring us word:
Thus you can understand that with no sense

100 Left to us, all our knowledge will be dead
From that Moment when the future's door is shut."
Then, moved by compunction for my fault, I said:

"Will you now tell the one who fell back flat
His son is truly still among the living?
Tell him what caused my silence: that my thought

Had wandered into that error which your resolving
Just wiped away." And now I heard my guide
Calling me back; so, hurriedly contriving

To learn, I begged the shade to say if he could
110 Who lay there with him, and I heard him answer:
"I lie with over a thousand of the dead;

The second Frederick is among the number,
And the Cardinal; of others I will not speak."
With that he hid himself. I walked back over

To the ancient poet, with my thoughts at work
Mulling the words that bore such menace to me.
My guide set out, and as we walked he spoke:

"Why is it you're disturbed?" I told him why;
"Preserve in memory what you have heard
120 Against yourself," the sage advised. "And I pray

You, listen"—he raised a finger at the word.
"When you confront her radiance, whose eyes can see
Everything in their fair clarity, be assured

Then you shall learn what your life's journey will be."
He turned to the left; and leaving the city wall
Behind our backs we continued on our way

Toward the center which was now our goal,
Following a path that strikes the valley floor:
And from that valley rose an odor so foul

150 The stench repelled us even high up there.

- In su l'estremità d'un'alta ripa
 che facevan gran pietre rotte in cerchio,
 venimmo sopra più crudele stipa;
 e quivi, per l'orribile soperchio
 del puzzo che 'l profondo abisso gitta,
 ci raccostammo, in dietro, ad un coperchio
 d'un grand' avello, ov' io vidi una scritta
 che dicea: 'Anastasio papa guardo,
 lo qual trasse Fotin de la via dritta'.*
- 10 «Lo nostro scender conviene esser tardo,
 sì che s'ausi un poco in prima il senso
 al tristo fiato; e poi no i fia riguardo».
 Così 'l maestro; e io «Alcun compenso»,
 dissi lui, «trova che 'l tempo non passi
 perduto». Ed elli: «Vedi ch'a ciò penso».
 «Figliuol mio, dentro da cotesti sassi»,
 cominciò poi a dir, «son tre cerchietti
 di grado in grado, come que' che lassi.
 Tutti son pien di spirti maladetti;
 20 ma perché poi ti basti pur la vista,
 intendi come e perché son costretti.
 D'ogne malizia, ch'odio in cielo acquista,
 ingiuria è 'l fine, ed ogne fin cotale
 o con forza o con frode altrui contrista.
 Ma perché frode è de l'uom proprio male,
 più spiace a Dio; e però stan di sotto
 li frodolenti, e più dolor li assale.
 Di violenti il primo cerchio è tutto;
 ma perché si fa forza a tre persone,
 30 in tre gironi è distinto e costruito.

CANTO XI

Up on the topmost rim of a deep-cut bank
Formed by a circle of massive, fissured rock,
We stood above a pen more cruel. The stink

Thrown up from the abyss had grown so thick
Its excess drove us to shelter in the space
Behind a great tomb's lid. It bore a plaque

Inscribed: "I hold Pope Anastasius,
Drawn by Photinus from the proper path."
"We must put off descending farther than this,"

10 My master said, "until this rotten breath
Has become familiar to our sense of smell."
"Discover some matter to fill the lost time with,

Pray you," I answered, "so we may use it well."
"I am so minded," he said, and then: "My son,
Within these rocks three lesser circles fall,

Each one below another, like those you have seen,
And all of them are packed with accursèd souls;
In order that hereafter the sight alone

May be sufficient, you will hear what rules
20 Determine how and why they are constrained.
The end of every wickedness that feels

Heaven's hatred is injustice—and each end
Of this kind, whether by force or fraud, afflicts
Some other person. But since fraud is found

In humankind as its peculiar vice,
It angers God more: so the fraudulent
Are lower, and suffer more unhappiness.

The whole first circle is for the violent;
But, because violence involves a deed
30 Against three persons, its apportionment

A Dio, a sé, al prossimo si pòne
 far forza, dico in loro e in lor cose,
 come udirai con aperta ragione.
 Morte per forza e ferute dogliose
 nel prossimo si danno, e nel suo avere
 ruine, incendi e tollette dannose;
 onde omicide e ciascun che mal fiere,
 guastatori e predon, tutti tormenta
 lo giron primo per diverse schiere.
 40 Puote omo avere in sé man violenta
 e ne' suoi beni; e però nel secondo
 giron convien che sanza pro si penta
 qualunque priva sé del vostro mondo,
 biscazza e fonde la sua facultade,
 e piange là dov' esser de' giocondo.
 Puossi far forza ne la deïtade,
 col cor negando e bestemmiano quella,
 e spregiando natura e sua bontade;
 e però lo minor giron suggella
 50 del segno suo e Soddoma e Caorsa
 e chi, spregiando Dio col cor, favella.
 La frode, ond' ogni coscienza è morsa,
 può l'omo usare in colui che 'n lui fida
 e in quel che fidanza non imborsa.
 Questo modo di retro par ch'incida
 pur lo vinco d'amor che fa natura;
 onde nel cerchio secondo s'annida
 ipocresia, lusinghe e chi affattura,
 falsità, ladroneccio e simonia,
 60 ruffian, baratti e simile lordura.
 Per l'altro modo quell' amor s'oblia
 che fa natura, e quel ch'è poi aggiunto,
 di che la fede spezial si cria;
 onde nel cerchio minore, ov' è 'l punto
 de l'universo in su che Dite siede,
 qualunque trade in eterno è consunto».

And fabrication are in three rings: to God,
To one's self, or one's neighbor, all violence
Is done—to them, or to their things instead,

As I'll explain. By violence, death and wounds
Of grievous kinds are inflicted on one's neighbor;
And on his property—arson, ruinous offense,

Extortion. So the first ring is the harbor
Of torment for the homicides and those
Who strike out wrongfully: despoiler, robber,

40 And plunderer, in various companies.
One may lay violent hands on his own being,
Or what belongs to himself, and all of these

Repent in vain within the second ring:
He who deprives himself of your world sins thus;
Or gambles; or dissipates whatever thing

He has of worth; or weeps when he should rejoice.
Violence against the Deity, too, exists:
To deny and blaspheme Him in the heart does this,

50 As does despising Nature and her gifts;
Therefore the smallest ring imprints its mark
On Sodom and Cahors and him who speaks

Contemptuously of God with all his heart.
Fraud, which bites every conscience, a man may play
Either on one who trusts him, or one who does not.

The latter of the two is seen to destroy
Only those bonds of love that nature makes:
So in the second circle hypocrisy,

60 Flatterers, sorcery, larceny, simoniacs,
With pimps, barrators, and such filth have their nest.
But the other kind of fraud not only forsakes

The love that nature makes, but the special trust
That further, added love creates: therefore
At the universe's core, inside the least

E io: «Maestro, assai chiara procede
 la tua ragione, e assai ben distingue
 questo baràtro e 'l popol ch'e' possiede.
 70 Ma dimmi: quei de la palude pingue,
 che mena il vento, e che batte la pioggia,
 e che s'incontran con sì aspre lingue,
 perché non dentro da la città roggia
 sono ei puniti, se Dio li ha in ira?
 e se non li ha, perché sono a tal foggia?».

Ed elli a me «Perché tanto delira»,
 disse, «lo 'ngegno tuo da quel che sòle?
 o ver la mente dove altrove mira?
 Non ti rimembra di quelle parole
 80 con le quai la tua Etica pertratta
 le tre disposizion che 'l ciel non vole,
 incontenenza, malizia e la matta
 bestialitade? e come incontenenza
 men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta?
 Se tu riguardi ben questa sentenza,
 e rechiti a la mente chi son quelli
 che sù di fuor sostegnon penitenza,
 tu vedrai ben perché da questi felli
 90 la divina vendetta li martelli».

«O sol che sani ogne vista turbata,
 tu mi contenti sì quando tu solvi,
 che, non men che saver, dubbiar m'aggrata.
 Ancora in dietro un poco ti rivolvi,
 diss'io, «là dove di' ch'usura offende
 la divina bontade, e 'l groppo solvi».

«Filosofia», mi disse, «a chi la 'ntende,
 nota, non pure in una sola parte,
 come natura lo suo corso prende

Circle, the seat of Dis, every betrayer
Eternally is consumed." "Master, you state
All of this lucidly, and you make clear

Just what it is that distinguishes this pit
And those it holds. But what of those condemned
To languish in the thick marsh, that other set

70 Beaten by rain, those driven by the wind,
And those who collide and clash with angry tongues:
How is it that all these are not confined

In the red city to suffer, if their wrongs
Have brought God's anger on them? And if not,
Then why are they in such a plight?" "What brings

Your thoughts to wander so from the proper route?
Where has your mind been gazing? Don't you recall
A passage in your *Ethics*, the words that treat

80 Three dispositions counter to Heaven's will:
Incontinence, malice, insane brutality?
And how incontinence is less distasteful

To God, and earns less blame? Think carefully
About this doctrine, consider who they are
Whose punishment is above, outside: you'll see

Clearly why they are apart from the wicked here,
And why His vengeance smites them with less wrath."
"O sun, that makes all troubled vision clear,

You give solutions I am so contented with
That asking, no less than knowing, pleases me.
90 But please," I said, "could we retrace our path

Back to the place where you said usury
Offends celestial Goodness, and solve that knot?"
He said, "For the comprehending, philosophy

Serves in more places than one to demonstrate
How Nature takes her own course from the design
Of the Divine Intelligence, and Its art.

100 dal divino 'ntelletto e da sua arte;
e se tu ben la tua Fisica note,
tu troverai, non dopo molte carte,
che l'arte vostra quella, quanto pote,
segue, come 'l maestro fa 'l discente;
sì che vostr' arte a Dio quasi è nepote.
Da queste due, se tu ti rechi a mente
lo Genesi dal principio, convene
prender sua vita e avvanzar la gente;
e perché l'usuriere altra via tene,
110 per sé natura e per la sua seguace
dispregia, poi ch'in altro pon la spene.
Ma seguimi oramai che 'l gir mi piace;
ché i Pesci guizzan su per l'orizzonta,
e 'l Carro tutto sovra 'l Coro giace,
e 'l balzo via là oltra si dismonta».

Study your *Physics* well, and you'll be shown
In not too many pages that your art's good
Is to follow Nature insofar as it can,

100 As a pupil emulates his master; God
Has as it were a grandchild in your art.
By these two, man should thrive and gain his bread—

If you remember Genesis—from the start.
But since the usurer takes a different way,
He contemns Nature both in her own sort

And in her follower as well, while he
Chooses to invest his hope another place.
But now come follow me: it pleases me

To go now; for above us in the skies
110 The Fish are quivering at the horizon's edge,
And the whole Wagon lies over Caurus—and this,

Farther ahead, is where we descend the ridge.”

*Era lo loco ov' a scender la riva
venimmo, alpestro e, per quel che v'er' anco,
tal, ch'ogne vista ne sarebbe schiva.*

*Qual è quella ruina che nel fianco
di qua da Trento l'Adice percosse,
o per tremoto o per sostegno manco,
che da cima del monte, onde si mosse,
al piano è sì la roccia discoscesa,
ch'alcuna via darebbe a chi sù fosse:*

10 *cotal di quel burrato era la scesa;
e 'n su la punta de la rotta lacca
l'infamïa di Creti era distesa
che fu concetta ne la falsa vacca;
e quando vide noi, sé stesso morse,
sì come quei cui l'ira dentro fiacca.*

*Lo savio mio inver' lui gridò: «Forse
tu credi che qui sia 'l duca d'Atene,
che sù nel mondo la morte ti porse?»*

*Pàrtiti, bestia, ché questi non vene
ammaestrato da la tua sorella,
ma vassi per veder le vostre pene».*

*Qual è quel toro che si slaccia in quella
c'ha ricevuto già 'l colpo mortale,
che gir non sa, ma qua e là saltella,
vid' io lo Minotauro far cotal;*

*e quello accorto gridò: «Corri al varco;
mentre ch'e' 'nfuria, è buon che tu ti cale».*

*Così prendemmo via giù per lo scarco
di quelle pietre, che spesso moviensi
30 sotto i miei piedi per lo novo carco.*

*Io già pensando; e quei disse: «Tu pensi
forse a questa ruina, ch'è guardata
da quell' ira bestial ch'i' ora spensi.*

The alp-like place we came for our descent
 Down the steep bank was one no eye would seek,
 Because of what was there. This side of Trent,

There is a place a landslide fell and struck
 The Adige's flank: because of unstable ground
 Or earthquake, rocks once tumbled from the peak

And formed a passage where people can descend.
 Such was the footing we had down that ravine—
 And at the broken chasm's edge we found

10 The infamy of Crete, conceived within
 The false cow's shell. When he saw us come his way
 He bit himself in rage like one insane.

My master called, "Perhaps you think you see
 The Duke of Athens—the one who dealt you death
 Up in the world. Beast, take yourself away:

This is no man your sister taught; in truth,
 He has come here to witness your punishment."
 As a bull breaks loose in the deathblow's aftermath,

20 And plunges back and forth, but though unspent
 Cannot go forward, so did the Minotaur act.
 My wary guide cried, "Run to the descent—

Go quickly, while he's raging." So we picked
 Our way down over a rubble of scattered stone
 That shifted under me often as I walked,

With the new weight. While I was climbing down
 I thought to myself; and soon my master said,
 "You may be thinking about this ruined terrain

Or vo' che sappi che l'altra fiata
 ch'i' discesi qua giù nel basso inferno,
 questa roccia non era ancor cascata.
 Ma certo poco pria, se ben discerno,
 che venisse colui che la gran preda
 levò a Dite del cerchio superno,
 40 da tutte parti l'alta valle fedà
 tremò sì, ch'i' pensai che l'universo
 sentisse amor, per lo qual è chi creda
 più volte il mondo in caòsso converso;
 e in quel punto questa vecchia roccia,
 qui e altrove, tal fece riverso.
 Ma ficca li occhi a valle, ché s'approccia
 la riviera del sangue in la qual bolle
 qual che per violenza in altrui nocchia».

Oh cieca cupidigia e ira folle,
 50 che sì ci sproni ne la vita corta,
 e ne l'eterna poi sì mal c'immolle!

Io vidi un'ampia fossa in arco torta,
 come quella che tutto 'l piano abbraccia,
 secondo ch'avea detto la mia scorta;
 e tra 'l piè de la ripa ed essa, in traccia
 corrien centauri, armati di saette,
 come solien nel mondo andare a caccia.
 Veggendoci calar, ciascun ristette,
 e de la schiera tre si dipartiro
 60 con archi e asticciuole prima elette;
 e l'un gridò da lungi: «A qual martiro
 venite voi che scendete la costa?
 Ditel costinci; se non, l'arco tiro».

Lo mio maestro disse: «La risposta
 farem noi a Chirón costà di presso:
 mal fu la voglia tua sempre sì tosta».

Guarded by the feral rage that I defied
And quelled just now. Know then: that other time
30 I journeyed here, this rock had not yet slid.

It must have been a little before He came
To Dis, if I have reckoned rightly, to take
The great spoil of the upper circle with Him—

When the deep, fetid valley began to shake
Everywhere, so that I thought the universe
Felt love: the force that has brought chaos back

Many times over, say some philosophers.
And at that moment this ancient rock, both here
And elsewhere, tumbled to where it now appears.

40 But keep your eyes below us, for coming near
Is the river of blood—in which boils everyone
Whose violence hurt others.” O blind desire

Of covetousness, O anger gone insane—
That goad us on through life, which is so brief,
To steep in eternal woe when life is done.

I saw a broad moat bending in a curve
Encircling the plain, just as my guide had said:
Between the moat and the bottom of the cliff

50 Centaurs who were armed with bows and arrows sped
In file, as on a hunt they might be found
When they were in the world. When we appeared

They halted, and three came forward from the band
With bows and shafts they chose, held ready to aim.
One hailed us from a distance: “You who descend

The hillside, for what torment have you come?
Tell us from there—if not, I draw my bow!”
“We will make answer to Chiron,” my guide told him,

60 “Who is beside you; you always brought yourself woe
Because your will was hasty.” He nudged me and said,
“That one is Nessus: he who met death through

Poi mi tentò, e disse: «Quelli è Nesso,
 che morì per la bella Deianira,
 e fé di sé la vendetta elli stesso.
 70 E quel di mezzo, ch'al petto si mira,
 è il gran Chirón, il qual nodrì Achille;
 quell' altro è Folo, che fu sì pien d'ira.
 Dintorno al fosso vanno a mille a mille,
 saettando qual anima si svelle
 del sangue più che sua colpa sortille».

Noi ci appressammo a quelle fiere isnelle:
 Chirón prese uno strale, e con la cocca
 fece la barba in dietro a le mascelle.
 Quando s'ebbe scoperta la gran bocca,
 80 disse a' compagni: «Siete voi accorti
 che quel di retro move ciò ch'el tocca?
 Così non soglion far li piè d'i morti».

E 'l mio buon duca, che già li er' al petto,
 dove le due nature son consorti,
 rispuose: «Ben è vivo, e sì soletto
 mostrar li mi convien la valle buia;
 necessità 'l ci 'nduce, e non diletto.
 Tal si partì da cantare alleluia
 che mi commise quest' officio novo:
 90 non è ladron, né io anima fuia.

Ma per quella virtù per cu' io movo
 li passi miei per sì selvaggia strada,
 danne un de' tuoi, a cui noi siamo a provo,
 e che ne mostri là dove si guada,
 e che porti costui in su la groppa,
 ché non è spirto che per l'aere vada».

Chirón si volse in su la destra poppa,
 e disse a Nesso: «Torna, e sì li guida,
 e fa cansar s'altra schiera v'intoppa».

Fair Deianira, and by himself satisfied
Vengeance for himself. The middle one whose gaze
Is directed at his breast, with lowered head,

Is the great Chiron, tutor of Achilles.
The other is Pholus, full of rage. They circle
The moat by thousands; if any soul should rise

Out of the blood more than its guilt makes lawful,
They pierce it with their arrows." As we came close,
Chiron drew an arrow's notch back through the tangle

70 Of beard along his jaw to clear a space
For his large mouth, and to the others he said:
"Have you observed how that one's steps displace

Objects his body touches? Feet of the dead
Are not accustomed to behave like that."
And my good leader, who by this time stood

Quite near the Centaur's chest, just opposite
The place where Chiron's two natures joined, replied:
"He is indeed alive, and in that state,

80 Alone; it falls to me to be his guide
Through the dark valley. It is necessity,
And not his pleasure, that puts him on this road.

From singing alleluia one came to me
To give me this strange mission; he is no thief,
Nor I a spirit given to larceny.

But by the Power that lets me walk a path
So savage, give us a member of your pack
To come along as companion to us both

90 And show us where the ford is—and on his back
Carry this one who, not a spirit, cannot
Fly through the air." Then Chiron turned and spoke,

Bending his torso toward Nessus on his right,
"Go back and guide them, then; and turn away
The challenge of any other troops you meet."

100 Or ci movemmo con la scorta fida
 lungo la proda del bollor vermiglio,
 dove i bolliti facieno alte strida.
 Io vidi gente sotto infino al ciglio;
 e 'l gran centauro disse: «E' son tiranni
 che dier nel sangue e ne l'aver di piglio.
 Quivi si piangon li spietati danni;
 quivi è Alessandro, e Dionisio fero
 che fé Cicilia aver dolorosi anni.
 E quella fronte c'ha 'l pel così nero,
 110 è Azzolino; e quell' altro ch'è biondo,
 è Opizzo da Esti, il qual per vero
 fu spento dal figliastro sù nel mondo».

Allor mi volsi al poeta, e quei disse:
 «Questi ti sia or primo, e io secondo».
 Poco più oltre il centauro s'affisse
 sovr' una gente che 'nfino a la gola
 pareva che di quel bulicame uscisse.
 Mostrocci un'ombra da l'un canto sola,
 dicendo: «Colui fesse in grembo a Dio
 120 lo cor che 'n su Tamisi ancor si cola».
 Poi vidi gente che di fuor del rio
 tenean la testa e ancor tutto 'l casso;
 e di costoro assai riconobb' io.
 Così a più a più si facea basso
 quel sangue, sì che cocea pur li piedi;
 e quindi fu del fosso il nostro passo.
 «Sì come tu da questa parte vedi
 lo bulicame che sempre si scema»,
 disse 'l centauro, «voglio che tu credi
 130 che da quest' altra a più a più giù preme
 lo fondo suo, infin ch'el si raggiunge
 ove la tirannia convien che gema.
 La divina giustizia di qua punge
 quell' Attila che fu flagello in terra,
 e Pirro e Sesto; e in eterno munge
 le lagrime, che col bollor diserra,
 a Rinier da Corneto, a Rinier Pazzo,
 che fecero a le strade tanta guerra».
 Poi si rivolse e ripassossi 'l guazzo.

Now with a trusty escort, we made our way
Along the boiling crimson—those boiled inside
Shrieking beside us. On some it came so high

It covered their eyebrows. The mighty centaur said,
“These are the tyrants given to blood and plunder.
Here they lament the merciless harm they did:

100 Here’s Alexander, and he who held Sicily under
For many a sad year, fierce Dionysius;
That black hair there is Azzolino’s; and yonder,

That other fairer head is Obizzo of Esti’s:
In the world above, the man his stepson slew.”
I turned toward the poet, whose answer was,

“Let him be first guide, I your second, now.”
A little farther on, the centaur stopped
At a crowd seeming to rise from the boiling flow

Up to the throat. He showed us one who kept
110 Off to one side. “Within the bosom of God
He stabbed another’s heart, and it has dripped

Blood ever since upon the Thames,” he said.
I saw some others whose head and even chest
Came up above the stream, and in that crowd

Were many I recognized. The blood decreased,
Sinking by more and more until it cooked
Only the feet, and that is where we crossed.

“To here, you have seen the boiling stream contract,”
He said. “From here, its bed grows deeper again
120 Till it completes its circle, to reconnect

With where God’s justice makes the tyrants groan:
It goads Attila, a scourge on earth, and Pyrrhus,
And Sextus; there also are eternally drawn

The tears, unlocked by boiling, milked from the eyes
Of Rinier Pazzo and Rinier da Corneto—men
Who brought such warfare to the public ways.”

Then he turned back, and crossed the ford again.

CANTO XIII

- Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato,
quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco
che da neun sentiero era segnato.
Non fronda verde, ma di color fosco;
non rami schietti, ma nodosi e 'nvolti;
non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con tòsco.
Non han sì aspri sterpi né sì folti
quelle fiere selvagge che 'n odio hanno
tra Cecina e Corneto i luoghi còlti.*
- 10 *Quivi le brutte Arpie lor nidi fanno,
che cacciar de le Strofade i Troiani
con tristo annunzio di futuro danno.
Ali hanno late, e colli e visi umani,
piè con artigli, e pennuto 'l gran ventre;
fanno lamenti in su li alberi strani.
E 'l buon maestro «Prima che più entre,
sappi che se' nel secondo girone»,
mì cominciò a dire, «e sarai mentre
che tu verrai ne l'orribil sabbione.*
- 20 *Però riguarda ben; sì vederai
cose che torrien fede al mio sermone».*
*Io sentia d'ogne parte trarre guai
e non vedea persona che 'l facesse;
per ch'io tutto smarrito m'arrestai.
Cred' io ch'ei credette ch'io credesse
che tante voci uscisser, tra quei bronchi,
da gente che per noi si nascondesse.*
- Però disse 'l maestro: «Se tu tronchi
qualche fraschetta d'una d'este piante,
li pensier c'hai si faran tutti monchi».*
- 30 *Allor porsi la mano un poco avante
e colsi un ramicel da un gran pruno;
e 'l tronco suo gridò: «Perché mi schiante?».*

CANTO XIII

Nessus had not yet reached the other side
When we moved forward into woods unmarked
By any path. The leaves not green, earth-hued;

The boughs not smooth, knotted and crooked-forked;
No fruit, but poisoned thorns. Of the wild beasts
Near Cecina and Corneto, that hate fields worked

By men with plough and harrow, none infests
Thickets that are as rough or dense as this.
Here the repellent Harpies make their nests,

10 Who drove the Trojans from the Strophades
With dire announcements of the coming woe.
They have broad wings, a human neck and face,

Clawed feet, and swollen, feathered bellies; they caw
Their lamentations in the eerie trees.
Here the good master began, "Before you go

Farther, be aware that now you are in this,
The second ring—and so you shall be until
The horrible sand. Look well, for here one sees

Things which in words would be incredible."
20 On every side, I heard wailing voices grieve,
Yet I could not see anyone there to wail,

And so I stopped, bewildered. I believe
My guide believed that in my belief the voices
I heard from somewhere in among the grove

Came somehow from people who were in hiding places—
And therefore the master said, "If you remove
A little branch from any one of these pieces

Of foliage around us, the thoughts you have
Will also be broken off." I reached my hand
30 A little in front of me and twisted off

Da che fatto fu poi di sangue bruno,
 ricominciò a dir: «Perché mi scerpi?
 non hai tu spirto di pietade alcuno?
 Uomini fummo, e or siam fatti sterpi:
 ben dovebb' esser la tua man più pia,
 se state fossimo anime di serpi».

40 Come d'un stizzo verde ch'arso sia
 da l'un de' capi, che da l'altro geme
 e cigola per vento che va via,
 sì de la scheggia rotta usciva insieme
 parole e sangue; ond' io lasciai la cima
 cadere, e stetti come l'uom che teme.
 «S'elli avesse potuto creder prima»,
 rispuose 'l savio mio, «anima lesa,
 ciò c'ha veduto pur con la mia rima,
 non averebbe in te la man distesa;

50 ma la cosa incredibile mi fece
 indurlo ad ovra ch'a me stesso pesa.
 Ma dilli chi tu fosti, sì che 'n vece
 d'alcun' ammenda tua fama rinfreschi
 nel mondo sù, dove tornar li lece».

E 'l tronco: «Sì col dolce dir m'adeschi,
 ch'i' non posso tacere; e voi non gravi
 perch' io un poco a ragionar m'inveschi.
 Io son colui che tenni ambo le chiavi
 del cor di Federigo, e che le volsi,
 60 serrando e diserrando, sì soavi,
 che dal secreto suo quasi ogn' uom tolsi;
 fede portai al glorioso offizio,
 tanto ch'i' ne perde' li sonni e ' polsi.
 La meretrice che mai da l'ospizio
 di Cesare non torse li occhi putti,
 morte comune e de le corti vizio,

One shoot of a mighty thornbush—and it moaned,
“Why do you break me?” Then after it had grown
Darker with blood, it began again and mourned,

“Why have you torn me? Have you no pity, then?
Once we were men, now we are stumps of wood:
Your hand should show some mercy, though we had been

The souls of serpents.” As flames spurt at one side
Of a green log oozing sap at the other end,
Hissing with escaping air, so that branch flowed

40 With words and blood together—at which my hand
Released the tip, and I stood like one in dread.
“Had he been able to credit or comprehend

Before, O wounded spirit,” my sage replied,
“What he had witnessed only in my verses,
His hand would never have performed this deed

Against you. But the fact belief refuses
Compelled me, though it grieves me, thus to prompt him.
But tell him who you are, so that his praises

May make amends by freshening your fame
50 When he returns again to the world above,
As he is permitted.” And the broken stem:

“Your words have so much sweetness they contrive
To draw me out of silence: I am enticed
To talk a little while, may it not prove

Burdensome to you. I am he who possessed
Both keys to Frederick’s heart—and I turned either,
Unlocking and locking with so soft a twist

I kept his secrets from almost any other.
To this, my glorious office, I stayed so true
60 I lost both sleep and life. The harlot that never

Takes its whore’s eyes from Caesar’s retinue—
The common fatal Vice of courts—inflamed
All minds against me; and they, inflamed so,

infiammò contra me li animi tutti;
 e li 'nfiammati infiammar sì Augusto,
 che ' lieti onor tornaro in tristi lutti.

70 L'animo mio, per disdegnoso gusto,
 credendo col morir fuggir disdegno,
 ingiusto fece me contra me giusto.
 Per le nove radici d'esto legno
 vi giuro che già mai non ruppi fede
 al mio signor, che fu d'onor sì degno.

E se di voi alcun nel mondo riede,
 conforti la memoria mia, che giace
 ancor del colpo che 'nvidia le diede».

Un poco attese, e poi «Da ch'el si tace»,
 80 disse 'l poeta a me, «non perder l'ora;
 ma parla, e chiedi a lui, se più ti piace».

Ond' io a lui: «Domandal tu ancora
 di quel che credi ch'a me satisfaccia;
 ch'ì non potrei, tanta pietà m'accora».

Perciò ricominciò: «Se l'om ti faccia
 liberamente ciò che 'l tuo dir priega,
 spirito incarcerato, ancor ti piaccia
 di dirne come l'anima si lega
 in questi nocchi; e dinne, se tu puoi,
 90 s'alcuna mai di tai membra si spiega».

Allor soffiò il tronco forte, e poi
 si convertì quel vento in cotal voce:
 «Brevemente sarà risposto a voi.
 Quando si parte l'anima feroce
 dal corpo ond' ella stessa s'è disvelta,
 Minòs la manda a la settima foce.
 Cade in la selva, e non l'è parte scelta;
 ma là dove fortuna la balestra,
 quivi germoglia come gran di spelta.

100 Surge in vermena e in pianta silvestra:
 l'Arpie, pascendo poi de le sue foglie,
 fanno dolore, e al dolor fenestra.

So inflamed Augustus that the honors I claimed
In gladness were converted into pain.
My mind, in its disdainful temper, assumed

Dying would be a way to escape disdain,
Making me treat my juster self unjustly.
And by this tree's strange roots, I swear again:

70 I never betrayed my lord, who was so worthy
Of honor. If you return to the world above,
Either of you, please comfort my memory

Still prostrate from the blow that Envy gave."
The poet waited a moment, then said to me,
"Since he is silent, don't waste the time you have,

But speak, and ask him what you wish." And I:
"You question him, and ask what you discern
Would satisfy me; I cannot because of pity

That fills my heart." Therefore my guide began,
80 "For this man freely to do the thing you say,
Imprisoned spirit, tell him if you can

And if it pleases you, in just what way
The soul is bound in knots like these; give word
Also, if any soul could be set free

From members such as these." It puffed air hard,
And soon that exhalation became a voice.
"You shall be answered briefly then," it uttered;

"When the fierce soul has quit the fleshly case
It tore itself from, Minos sends it down
90 To the seventh depth. It falls to this wooded place—

No chosen spot, but where fortune flings it in—
And there it sprouts like a grain of spelt, to shoot
Up as a sapling, then a wild plant: and then

The Harpies, feeding on the foliage, create
Pain, and an outlet for the pain as well.
We too shall come like the rest, each one to get

Come l'altre verrem per nostre spoglie,
 ma non però ch'alcuna sen rivesta,
 ché non è giusto aver ciò ch'om si toglie.
 Qui le strascineremo, e per la mesta
 selva saranno i nostri corpi appesi,
 ciascuno al prun de l'ombra sua molesta».

Noi eravamo ancora al tronco attesi,
 110 credendo ch'altro ne volesse dire,
 quando noi fummo d'un romor sorpresi,
 similmente a colui che venire
 sente 'l porco e la caccia a la sua posta,
 ch'ode le bestie, e le frasche stormire.
 Ed ecco due da la sinistra costa,
 nudi e graffiati, fuggendo sì forte,
 che de la selva rompieno ogne rosta.
 Quel dinanzi: «Or accorri, accorri, morte!».
 E l'altro, cui pareva tardar troppo,
 120 gridava: «Lano, sì non furo accorte
 le gambe tue a le giostre dal Toppo!».
 E poi che forse li fallia la lena,
 di sé e d'un cespuglio fece un groppo.
 Di dietro a loro era la selva piena
 di nere cagne, bramose e correnti
 come veltri ch'uscisser di catena.
 In quel che s'appiattò miser li denti,
 e quel dilaceraro a brano a brano;
 poi sen portar quelle membra dolenti.
 130 Presemi allor la mia scorta per mano,
 e menommi al cespuglio che piangea
 per le rotture sanguinenti in vano.
 «O Iacopo», dicea, «da Santo Andrea,
 che t'è giovato di me fare schermo?
 che colpa ho io de la tua vita rea?».
 Quando 'l maestro fu sovr' esso fermo,
 disse: «Chi fosti, che per tante punte
 soffi con sangue doloroso sermo?»

His cast-off body—but not for us to dwell
Within again, for justice must forbid
Having what one has robbed oneself of; still,

100 Here we shall drag them, and through the mournful wood
Our bodies will be hung: with every one
Fixed on the thornbush of its wounding shade.”

We both were still attentive when it was done,
Thinking it might have more to say to us—
When an uproar surprised us, just as when

A hunter mindful of wild boar and the chase
Suddenly hears the beasts and crashing brush.
There on our left came two at a desperate pace,

110 Naked, torn, so hard pressed they seemed to crash
Headlong through every tangle the wood contained.
The one in front cried, “Come now, come in a rush,

O death!” The other shouted, falling behind,
“Your legs were not so nimble when you ran
At the jousting of the Toppo, Lano my friend!”

And then, perhaps because his breath began
To fail him, he stopped and hunched against a bush
As if to make himself and its branches one.

120 Behind them, eager as greyhounds off the leash,
Black bitches filled the woods, avid and quick.
They set their teeth on the one who stopped to crouch,

And tore his limbs apart; and then they took
The wretched members away. Then my escort
Led me by one hand to the bush—which spoke,

Grieving in vain through places where it was hurt
And bled: “Jacopo da Santo Andrea,” it cried,
“What did you gain by shielding in me? What part

Had I in your sinful life?” My master said,
When he was standing above it, “And who were you,
Who through so many wounds exhale this blood

*Ed elli a noi: «O anime che giunte
140 siete a veder lo strazio disonesto
c'ha le mie fronde sì da me disgiunte,
raccoglietele al piè del tristo cesto.
I' fui de la città che nel Batista
mutò 'l primo padrone; ond' ei per questo
sempre con l'arte sua la farà trista;
e se non fosse che 'n sul passo d'Arno
rimane ancor di lui alcuna vista,
que' cittadin che poi la rifondarno
150 sovra 'l cener che d'Attila rimase,
avrebber fatto lavorare indarno.
Io fei gibetto a me de le mie case».*

130 Mixed with sad words?" It answered, "O souls—you two
Who arrive to see this shameful havoc crush
My leaves and tear them from me—gather them now,

And bring them to the foot of this wretched bush.
In life I was of the city that chose to leave
Mars, her first patron, and take the Baptist: for which

The art of Mars will always make her grieve.
And if his semblance did not in part remain
Still at the Arno, she would not survive—

And later, when they pitched the city again
140 Over the ashes left by Attila, those
Striving to refound it would have worked in vain.

And I—I made my own house be my gallows."

- Poi che la carità del natio loco
 mi strinse, raunai le fronde sparte
 e rende'le a colui, ch'era già fioco.
 Indi venimmo al fine ove si parte
 lo secondo giron dal terzo, e dove
 si vede di giustizia orribil arte.
 A ben manifestar le cose nove,
 dico che arrivammo ad una landa
 che dal suo letto ogni pianta rimuove.*
- 10 *La dolorosa selva l'è ghirlanda
 intorno, come 'l fosso tristo ad essa;
 quivi fermammo i passi a randa a randa.
 Lo spazzo era una rena arida e spessa,
 non d'altra foggia fatta che colei
 che fu da' piè di Caton già soppressa.
 O vendetta di Dio, quanto tu dei
 esser temuta da ciascun che legge
 ciò che fu manifesto a li occhi mei!
 D'anime nude vidi molte gregge*
- 20 *che piangean tutte assai miseramente,
 e pareva posta lor diversa legge.
 Supin giacea in terra alcuna gente,
 alcuna si sedea tutta raccolta,
 e altra andava continüamente.
 Quella che giva 'ntorno era più molta,
 e quella men che giacëa al tormento,
 ma più al duolo avea la lingua sciolta.
 Sovra tutto 'l sabbion, d'un cader lento,
 piovean di foco dilatate falde,*
- 30 *come di neve in alpe senza vento.
 Quali Alessandro in quelle parti calde
 d'India vide sopra 'l sùo stuolo
 fiamme cadere infino a terra salde,
 per ch'ei provide a scalpitar lo suolo
 con le sue schiere, acciò che lo vapore
 mei si stingueva mentre ch'era solo:*

CANTO XIV

Compelled by the love I bear my native place,
I gathered the scattered sprays and gave them again
To him who was already faint of voice.

From there we proceeded to the boundary line
At which the third and second rings divide:
And there a dreadful form of justice is seen.

To make these new things clear: we two now stood
On a plain whose bed rejects all plants—bare, flat,
Garlanded all around by the woeful wood

10 Just as the wood is by the sorrowful moat.
And here we stayed our steps at the very edge.
The ground was dry deep sand, resembling that

Which Cato trod. O vengeance of God, how much
Should you be feared by all of those who read
What my eyes saw! It was a great assemblage

Of naked souls in herds, all of whom mourned
Most miserably and seemed to be subject
To different laws. Some lay upon the ground,

20 Supine; some sat hunched up; while others walked
Restlessly about. It seemed that those who moved
Were the more numerous, those who lay abject

In torment, fewest—but it was they who grieved
With tongues most loosened by pain. All over the sand
Distended flakes of fire drifted from aloft

Slowly as mountain snow without a wind.
As when Alexander in India's hottest region
Saw flames fall on his army, intact to the ground,

And had his soldiers tramp the accumulation
To extinguish them before the fire could spread,
30 Eternal fire descended in such profusion

tale scendeva l'eternale ardore;
 onde la rena s'accendea, com' esca
 sotto focile, a doppiar lo dolore.
 40 Senza riposo mai era la tresca
 de le misere mani, or quindi or quinci
 escotendo da sé l'arsura fresca.
 I' cominciai: «Maestro, tu che vinci
 tutte le cose, fuor che ' demon duri
 ch'a l'intrar de la porta incontra uscinci,
 chi è quel grande che non par che curi
 lo 'ncendio e giace dispettoso e torto,
 sì che la pioggia non par che 'l maturi?».

E quel medesmo, che si fu accorto
 50 ch'io domandava il mio duca di lui,
 gridò: «Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto.
 Se Giove stanchi 'l suo fabbro da cui
 crucciato prese la folgore aguta
 onde l'ultimo di percosso fui;
 o s'elli stanchi li altri a muta a muta
 in Mongibello a la focina negra,
 chiamando "Buon Vulcano, aiuta, aiuta!",
 sì com' el fece a la pugna di Flegra,
 e me saetti con tutta sua forza:

60 non ne potrebbe aver vendetta allegra».

Allora il duca mio parlò di forza
 tanto, ch'ì non l'avea sì forte udito:
 «O Capaneo, in ciò che non s'ammorza
 la tua superbia, se' tu più punito;
 nullo martiro, fuor che la tua rabbia,
 sarebbe al tuo furor dolor compito».

Poi si rivolse a me con miglior labbia,
 dicendo: «Quei fu l'un d'i sette regi
 ch'assiser Tebe; ed ebbe e par ch'elli abbia

70 Dio in disdegno, e poco par che 'l pregi;
 ma, com' io dissi lui, li suoi dispetti
 sono al suo petto assai debiti fregi.
 Or mi vien dietro, e guarda che non metti,
 ancor, li piedi ne la rena arsiccia;
 ma sempre al bosco tien li piedi stretti».

Tacendo divenimmo là 've spiccia
 fuor de la selva un picciol fiumicello,
 lo cui rossore ancor mi raccapriccia.

Sand kindled like tinder under flint, and made
The pain redouble—with their dancing hands
Not resting even for a moment they pawed

Themselves now here, now there, and beat the brands
Of fresh fire off. “O Master,” I began,
“Who vanquish all except the stubborn fiends

That opposed us at the gate: who is that one,
The great one seeming to pay no heed to the fire,
Who lies disdainful and scowling, so that the rain

40 Seems not to ripen him?” He appeared to hear
Me ask about him, and shouted, “What I was
Alive, I am in death! Though Jove may wear

His smith out, from whom anger made him seize
The sharpened bolt that smote me my last day;
And though he wears out every smith he has

At Mongibello’s black forge; and though he cry,
‘Help, help, good Vulcan!’ just the way he did
Amid the battle of Phlegra, and hurl at me

50 With all his might—he still will not have had
The pleasure of his vengeance.” Then my guide
Spoke with more force than I had heard, and said,

“O Capaneus, that this unquenched pride
Remains in you just punishes you the more:
No torment but this raging of yours could goad

With agony enough to match your ire.”
Then gentler, to me: “He was one of seven kings
Who besieged Thebes, and bore—seems still to bear—

Disdain for God. But as I said, his revilings
Earn his breast fitting badges. Now follow my steps:
60 Tread, not the scorching sand, but a path that clings

Close to the wood.” In silence we reached a place
Where gushing from the woods a small stream poured
So red that it still makes me shudder. As issues

Quale del Bulicame esce ruscello
 80 che parton poi tra lor le peccatrici,
 tal per la rena giù sen giva quello.
 Lo fondo suo e ambo le pendici
 fatt' era 'n pietra, e ' margini dallato;
 per ch'io m'accorsi che 'l passo era lici.
 «Tra tutto l'altro ch'i' t'ho dimostrato,
 poscia che noi intrammo per la porta
 lo cui sogliare a nessuno è negato,
 cosa non fu da li tuoi occhi scorta
 notabile com' è 'l presente rio,
 90 che sovra sé tutte fiammelle ammorta».
 Queste parole fuor del duca mio;
 per ch'io 'l pregai che mi largisse 'l pasto
 di cui largito m'avèa il disio.
 «In mezzo mar siede un paese guasto»,
 diss' elli allora, «che s'appella Creta,
 sotto 'l cui rege fu già 'l mondo casto.
 Una montagna v'è che già fu lieta
 d'acqua e di fronde, che si chiamò Ida;
 or è diserta come cosa vieta.
 100 Rëa la scelse già per cuna fida
 del suo figliuolo, e per celarlo meglio,
 quando piangea, vi facea far le grida.
 Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio,
 che tien volte le spalle inver' Dammiata
 e Roma guarda come s'io specchio.
 La sua testa è di fin oro formata,
 e puro argento son le braccia e 'l petto,
 poi è di rame infino a la forcata;
 da indi in giù è tutto ferro eletto,
 110 salvo che 'l destro piede è terra cotta;
 e sta 'n su quel, più che 'n su l'altro, eretto.
 Ciascuna parte, fuor che l'oro, è rotta
 d'una fessura che lagrime goccia,
 le quali, accolte, fòran quella grotta.

That stream from Bulicame that is shared
Among the prostitutes, so this brook flowed
Down and across the sand. It was stone-floored;

Stone lined both banks and the margins on each side;
And I could see that this would be our route.
"In all that I have shown you," my master said,

70 "Since first we entered through that open gate
Whose threshold no one ever is denied,
Nothing your eyes have seen is so worth note

As this present stream which quenches in its flood
All of the flames above it." So word for word
My master spoke, and I asked him for the food

To fill the appetite these words inspired.
He answered, "In the middle of the sea
Lies a waste land called Crete, a realm whose lord

Governed the world in its age of purity.
80 The mountain Ida is there, which once was glad
With foliage and waters, and now must lie

Deserted, like some worn thing by time decayed.
Long ago Rhea chose it for her child
As his safe cradle; and since they had to hide,

Made all there shout whenever her infant wailed.
Within the mountain stands an immense Old Man,
Who turns his back toward Damietta, to hold

His gaze on Rome as on his mirror: of fine
Gold is his head, pure silver his arms and breast;
90 Down to the fork is brass, and from there down

The choicest iron comprises all the rest
But the right foot, of clay baked hard as brick:
On it, more weight than on the left is pressed.

Every part but the gold head bears a crack,
A fissure dripping tears that collect and force
Their passage down the cavern from rock to rock

Lor corso in questa valle si diroccia;
 fanno Acheronte, Stige e Flegetonta;
 poi sen van giù per questa stretta doccia,
 infin, là dove più non si dismonta,
 fanno Cocito; e qual sia quello stagno
 120 tu lo vedrai, però qui non si conta».

E io a lui: «Se 'l presente rigagno
 si diriva così dal nostro mondo,
 perché ci appar pur a questo vivagno?».
 Ed elli a me: «Tu sai che 'l loco è tondo;
 e tutto che tu sie venuto molto,
 pur a sinistra, giù calando al fondo,
 non se' ancor per tutto 'l cerchio vòlto;
 per che, se cosa n'apparisce nova,
 non de' addur maraviglia al tuo volto».

130 E io ancor: «Maestro, ove si trova
 Flegetonta e Letè? ché de l'un taci,
 e l'altro di' che si fa d'esta piova».

«In tutte tue question certo mi piaci»,
 rispuose, «ma 'l bollor de l'acqua rossa
 dovea ben solver l'una che tu faci.
 Letè vedrai, ma fuor di questa fossa,
 là dove vanno l'anime a lavarsi
 quando la colpa pentuta è rimossa».

Poi disse: «Omai è tempo da scostarsi
 140 dal bosco; fa che di retro a me vegne:
 li margini fan via, che non son arsi,
 e sopra loro ogne vapor si spegne».

Into this valley's depth, where as a source
They form the Acheron, Styx, and Phlegethon.
Then their way down is by this narrow course

100 Until, where all descending has been done,
They form Cocytus—and about that pool
I shall say nothing, for you will see it soon.”

And I to him: “But if this stream does fall
Thus from our world, then why does it appear
At only this border?” And he: “As you know well,

The place is round; although you have come far,
Toward the pit by left turns always down,
You haven't completed all the circle: therefore,

110 If anything new appears that we haven't seen,
It should not bring amazement to your face.”
And I said, “Where are Lethe and Phlegethon?

For you are silent regarding one of these,
And say the rain of tears creates the other.”
He: “All your questions please me; but in one case

The boiling of this red water should give the answer.
Lethe you shall see, but out of this abyss:
There where, repented guilt removed, souls gather

120 To cleanse themselves.” Then, “Now it is time for us
To leave the wood. The margins are not afire,
And make a pathway—over them, come close

Behind me: every flame is extinguished here.”

- Ora cen porta l'un de' duri margini;
 e 'l fummo del ruscel di sopra aduggia,
 sì che dal foco salva l'acqua e li argini.
 Qual i Fiamminghi tra Guizzante e Bruggia,
 temendo 'l fiotto che 'nver' lor s'avventa,
 fanno lo schermo perché 'l mar si fuggia;
 e qual i Padoan lungo la Brenta,
 per difender lor ville e lor castelli,
 anzi che Carentana il caldo senta:
- 10 a tale imagine eran fatti quelli,
 tutto che né sì alti né sì grossi,
 qual che si fosse, lo maestro félli.
 Già eravam da la selva rimossi
 tanto, ch'i' non avrei visto dov' era,
 perch' io in dietro rivolto mi fossi,
 quando incontrammo d'anime una schiera
 che venian lungo l'argine, e ciascuna
 ci riguardava come suol da sera
 guardare uno altro sotto nuova luna;
- 20 e sì ver' noi aguzzavan le ciglia
 come 'l vecchio sartor fa ne la cruna.
 Così adocchiato da cotal famiglia,
 fui conosciuto da un, che mi prese
 per lo lembo e gridò: «Qual meraviglia!».
 E io, quando 'l suo braccio a me distese,
 ficcai li occhi per lo cotto aspetto,
 sì che 'l viso abbrusciato non difese
 la conoscenza süa al mio 'ntelletto;
 e chinando la mano a la sua faccia,
 30 rispuosi: «Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?».
 E quelli: «O figliuol mio, non ti dispiaccia
 se Brunetto Latino un poco teco
 ritorna 'n dietro e lascia andar la traccia».

CANTO XV

Now the firm margin bears us, under the vapor
Rising from the stream to form a shade and fend
The fire off, sheltering both banks and water.

As Flemings between Wissant and Bruges, to defend
Against the tide that rushes in on them,
Construct a bulwark to drive the sea from land;

And Paduans on the Brenta do, to stem
The water and protect their castle and town
Before Carentana feels the heat—in the same

10 Manner those banks were made, except the one
Who built them did not make them as high or thick,
Whoever he was. And I could not have seen

The wood that lay behind us, had I looked back,
When we encountered another troop of souls
Who looked at us the way that men will look

At one another at dusk, when daylight fails
Under a new moon: knitting their brows at us
The way old tailors do when threading needles.

20 While I was being examined by them thus,
One recognized me, and took me by the hem,
Crying, "Why what a marvel!" I fixed my eyes

On his scorched face as he reached out his arm,
And the baked features I saw did not forestall
My knowing him—I reached back down to him,

My hand toward his face, and answered his call:
"Are you here, Ser Brunetto?" He replied,
"My son, may it not displease you, if awhile

Brunetto Latini turns back to walk instead
With you a little, and lets the train go on."
30 "I beg it of you with all my heart," I said—

I' dissi lui: «Quanto posso, ven preco;
 e se volete che con voi m'asseggia,
 faròl, se piace a costui che vo seco».
 «O figliuol», disse, «qual di questa greggia
 s'arresta punto, giace poi cent' anni
 sanz' arrostarsi quando 'l foco il feggia.
 40 Però va oltre: i' ti verrò a' panni;
 e poi rigiugnerò la mia masnada,
 che va piangendo i suoi eterni danni».
 Io non osava scender de la strada
 per andar par di lui; ma 'l capo chino
 tenea com' uom che reverente vada.
 El cominciò: «Qual fortuna o destino
 anzi l'ultimo di qua giù ti mena?
 e chi è questi che mostra 'l cammino?».
 «Là sù di sopra, in la vita serena»,
 50 rispuos' io lui, «mi smarri' in una valle,
 avanti che l'età mia fosse piena.
 Pur ier mattina le volsi le spalle:
 questi m'apparve, tornand' io in quella,
 e reducemì a ca per questo calle».
 Ed elli a me: «Se tu segui tua stella,
 non puoi fallire a glorïoso porto,
 se ben m'accorsi ne la vita bella;
 e s'io non fossi sì per tempo morto,
 veggendo il cielo a te così benigno,
 60 dato t'avrei a l'opera conforto.
 Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno
 che discese di Fiesole ab antico,
 e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno,
 ti si farà, per tuo ben far, nimico;
 ed è ragion, ché tra li lazzi sorbi
 si disconvien fruttare al dolce fico.
 Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi;
 gent' è avara, invidiosa e superba:
 dai lor costumi fa che tu ti forbi.

“And should you prefer that you and I sit down,
If it pleases him with whom I go, I will.”
He said, “If any of this flock, O son,

Stops even for an instant, he must lie still
A hundred years, not brushing off the fire
That strikes him. Go, then: I’ll follow at your heel,

And then rejoin my band who walk in a choir
Lamenting their eternal woes.” Afraid
To step down to his level from where we were,

40 I bent my head, as in reverence. He said,
“What destiny or fortune makes you come
Before your final day; and who is this guide?”

“In the bright life above,” I answered him,
“I came into a valley and lost my way,
Before my age had reached its ripening time—

I turned my back on the place but yesterday.
He appeared to me at dawn, when I had turned
To go back down, and this path is the way

By which he leads me home.” Then he returned:
50 “If you keep navigating by your star
You’ll find a glorious port, if I discerned

Well in the fair life. Had my years been more,
So I could witness how heaven has been kind
To you, I would have wished your work good cheer.

But that ungrateful, malignant folk who descend
From those brought down from Fiesole long ago,
And who still smack of mountains and rocky ground,

Will make themselves, for good things that you do,
Your enemies—and there is reason in that:
60 Among the bitter sorb-trees, it seems undue

When the sweet fig in season comes to fruit.
The world’s old saying is that they are blind:
A people greedy, envious, proud—see fit

70 *La tua fortuna tanto onor ti serba,
 che l'una parte e l'altra avranno fame
 di te; ma lungi fia dal becco l'erba.
 Faccian le bestie fiesolane strame
 di lor medesme, e non tocchin la pianta,
 s'alcuna surge ancora in lor letame,
 in cui riviva la sementa santa
 di que' Roman che vi rimaser quando
 fu fatto il nido di malizia tanta.
 «Se fosse tutto pieno il mio dimando»,
 80 *rispuos' io lui, «voi non sareste ancora
 de l'umana natura posto in bando;
 ché 'n la mente m'è fitta, e or m'accora,
 la cara e buona imagine paterna
 di voi quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
 m'insegnavate come l'uom s'eterna:
 e quant' io l'abbia in grado, mentr' io vivo
 convien che ne la mia lingua si scerna.
 Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo,
 e serbolo a chiosar con altro testo
 90 *a donna che saprà, s'a lei arrivo.
 Tanto vogl' io che vi sia manifesto,
 pur che mia coscienza non mi garra,
 ch'a la Fortuna, come vuol, son presto.
 Non è nuova a li orecchi miei tal arra:
 però giri Fortuna la sua rota
 come le piace, e 'l villan la sua marra».
 Lo mio maestro allora in su la gota
 destra si volse in dietro e riguardommi;
 poi disse: «Bene ascolta chi la nota».***

To cleanse their habits from yourself. You'll find
Your fortune holds such honor as will induce
One party and the other to contend

In hunger to consume you—then the grass
Will be well kept at a distance from the goat.
Let the Fiesolan beasts go find their mess

70 By feeding on themselves, and spare the shoot
(If any still should grow on their heap of dung)
In which the sacred seed is living yet

Of Romans who remained when Florence went wrong,
Becoming a nest for the malevolent.”
“Could I have everything for which I long,

You would not still endure this banishment
Away from human nature,” I replied.
“Your image—dear, fatherly, benevolent—

Being fixed inside my memory, has imbued
80 My heart: when in the fair world, hour by hour
You taught me, patiently, it was you who showed

The way man makes himself eternal; therefore,
The gratitude I feel toward you makes fit
That while I live, I should declare it here.

And what you tell me of my future, I write—
And keep it with another text as well,
Till both are glossed by a lady of good wit

And knowledge, if I reach her. This much still
I say: so long as conscience is not betrayed,
90 I am prepared for Fortune to do her will.

My ears find nothing strange in what you have said:
As Fortune pleases let her wheel be turned,
And as he must let the peasant turn his spade.”

When he heard these words my master's head inclined
Toward the right, and looking at me he said,
“He who has listened well will understand.”

100 *Né per tanto di men parlando vommi
 con ser Brunetto, e dimando chi sono
 li suoi compagni più noti e più sommi.
 Ed elli a me: «Saper d'alcuno è buono;
 de li altri fia laudabile tacerci,
 ché 'l tempo saria corto a tanto suono.
 In somma sappi che tutti fur cherci
 e litterati grandi e di gran fama,
 d'un peccato medesimo al mondo lerci.
 Priscian sen va con quella turba grama,
 110 e Francesco d'Accorso anche; e vedervi,
 s'avessi avuto di tal tigna brama,
 colui potei che dal servo de' servi
 fu trasmutato d'Arno in Bacchiglione,
 dove lasciò li mal protesi nervi.
 Di più direi; ma 'l venire e 'l sermone
 più lungo esser non può, però ch'ì' veggio
 là surger nuovo fummo del sabbione.
 Gente vien con la quale esser non deggio.
 Sieti raccomandato il mio Tesoro,
 120 nel qual io vivo ancora, e più non cheggio».
 Poi si rivolse, e parve di coloro
 che corrono a Verona il drappo verde
 per la campagna; e parve di costoro
 quelli che vince, non colui che perde.*

And none the less I continued as I had
In speech with Ser Brunetto—would he tell
Which among his companions had enjoyed

100 Most eminence and fame in life? “It is well,”
He answered, “for me to say the names of some
But nothing of the rest. To name them all

Would demand speaking more words than we have time—
All clerics and men of letters, all renowned,
And in the world all stained by this one crime.

Priscian trudges in that unhappy band,
As does Francesco d’Accorso. And if you crave
To see such scurf, among them you can find

One whom the Servant of Servants asked to leave
110 The Arno for Bacchiglione; and there
He left his body, distended in its nerve

And muscle. And now, although I would say more,
My speech and walking with you must be brief:
On the sand, I see new smoke rise, where appear

New souls, with whom I must not be. I live
In my *Tesoro*—your judgment being won
For it, I ask no more.” And he went off,

Seeming to me like one of those who run
Competing for the green cloth in the races
120 Upon Verona’s field—and of them, like one

Who gains the victory, not one who loses.

- Già era in loco onde s'udia 'l rimbombo
 de l'acqua che cadea ne l'altro giro,
 simile a quel che l'arnie fanno rombo,
 quando tre ombre insieme si partiro,
 correndo, d'una torma che passava
 sotto la pioggia de l'aspro martiro.
 Venian ver' noi, e ciascuna gridava:
 «Sòstati tu ch'a l'abito ne sembri
 esser alcun di nostra terra prava».
- 10 Ahimè, che piaghe vidi ne' lor membri,
 ricenti e vecchie, da le fiamme incese!
 Ancor men duol pur ch'i' me ne rimembri.
 A le lor grida, il mio dottor s'attese;
 volse 'l viso ver' me, e «Or aspetta»,
 disse, «a costor si vuole esser cortese.
 E se non fosse il foco che saetta
 la natura del loco, i' dicerei
 che meglio stesse a te che a lor la fretta».
- Ricominciar, come noi restammo, ei
 20 l'antico verso; e quando a noi fuor giunti,
 fenno una rota di sé tutti e trei.
 Qual sogliono i campion far nudi e unti,
 avvisando lor presa e lor vantaggio,
 prima che sien tra lor battuti e punti,
 così rotando, ciascuno il visaggio
 drizzava a me, sì che 'n contraro il collo
 faceva ai piè continüo viaggio.
 E «Se miseria d'esto loco sollo
 rende in dispetto noi e nostri prieghi»,
 30 cominciò l'uno, «e 'l tinto aspetto e brollo,
 la fama nostra il tuo animo pieghi
 a dirne chi tu se', che i vivi piedi
 così sicuro per lo 'nferno fregghi.
 Questi, l'orme di cui pestar mi vedi,
 tutto che nudo e dipelato vada,
 fu di grado maggior che tu non credi:

CANTO XVI

I was already where we heard the noise
Of water winding downward as it spilled
To the next circle with a sound like bees,

When three shades bolted from a troop that filed
Under the rain of torment. Running toward us,
They cried: "Stop here, O you who are appareled

Like one in our own degenerate city's dress."
Ah me!—what wounds both old and new I saw
Where flames had burned their limbs: the same distress

10 Pains me again when I recall it now.
My teacher heeded their cries, then faced me to say,
"Now wait a little: to these three, one should show

Courtesy. Were it not for the fire let fly
By the nature of this place, I'd say such haste
Befits you more than them." We stopped; the three

Resumed their old lament—and when they had raced
Up to us, linked their bodies in a wheel.
As champions, naked and oiled, before the thrust

20 And parry begin, will eye their grip and circle
Seeking advantage, so each directed his face
Toward me, turning his neck against the pull

Of the ever-moving feet. "If our sandy place
Of squalor and charred features scorched of hair,"
One of them said, "lead you to show to us,

And what we ask, contempt—may our fame inspire
You to inform us who you are who pass
Through Hell with living footsteps. This man here,

Whose tracks you see me trample, though he goes
Naked and peeled was of a rank more high
30 Than you suppose: his noble grandmother was

nepote fu de la buona Gualdrada;
 Guido Guerra ebbe nome, e in sua vita
 fece col senno assai e con la spada.
 40 L'altro, ch'appresso me la rena trita,
 è Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, la cui voce
 nel mondo sù dovria esser gradita.
 E io, che posto son con loro in croce,
 Iacopo Rusticucci fui, e certo
 la fiera moglie più ch'altro mi nuoce».

S'i' fossi stato dal foco coperto,
 gittato mi sarei tra lor di sotto,
 e credo che 'l dottor l'avria sofferto;
 ma perch' io mi sarei bruciato e cotto,
 50 vinse paura la mia buona voglia
 che di loro abbracciar mi faceva ghiotto.
 Poi cominciai: «Non dispetto, ma doglia
 la vostra condizion dentro mi fisse,
 tanta che tardi tutta si dispoglia,
 tosto che questo mio signor mi disse
 parole per le quali i' mi pensai
 che qual voi siete, tal gente venisse.
 Di vostra terra sono, e sempre mai
 l'ovra di voi e li onorati nomi
 60 con affezion ritrassi e ascoltai.
 Lascio lo fele e vo per dolci pomi
 promessi a me per lo verace duca;
 ma 'nfino al centro pria convien ch'i' tomi».

«Se lungamente l'anima conduca
 le membra tue», rispuose quelli ancora,
 «e se la fama tua dopo te luca,
 cortesia e valor di se dimora
 ne la nostra città sì come suole,
 o se del tutto se n'è gita fora;
 70 ché Guglielmo Borsiere, il qual si duole
 con noi per poco e va là coi compagni,
 assai ne cruccia con le sue parole».

The good Gualdrada; his own name used to be
Guido Guerra, and in his life he attained
Much with his counsel and his sword. And he

Who treads the sand behind my feet is named
Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, a man whose voice
The world should more have prized. And I, condemned

With them, am Jacopo Rusticucci, whose fierce
Wife more than anything brought me wretchedness."
Could I be shielded from the fire, at this

40 I would have thrown myself down into the fosse
Among them—and so my teacher would permit,
I think; but knowing how that fiery place

Would burn and bake me, fear drained the appetite
My good will gave me to embrace them. I said,
"No: it was not contempt but sorrow I felt

At your condition—inscribed so deep inside
It will not leave me soon—when this my lord
Spoke words to me which I knew prophesied

Such men as you were coming. I always heard
50 (Since I am of your city), and have told over
Lovingly, your names and actions, both revered.

I leave the bitter gall behind, and aspire
Toward the sweet fruits promised by my guide,
But first I must go downward to the core."

"As your soul long may guide your limbs," he said,
"With your fame shining after you: so tell
If courtesy and valor still abide

Within our city, where they used to dwell.
Or are they gone from it entirely now—
60 By Guglielmo Borsiere, who came to Hell

Only a short time past, whom you see go
Among our legion, we have heard things said
That cause us much affliction." "Newcomers to you,

«La gente nuova e i sùbiti guadagni
 orgoglio e dismisura han generata,
 Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni».

Così gridai con la faccia levata;
 e i tre, che ciò inteser per risposta,
 guardar l'un l'altro com' al ver si guata.

«Se l'altre volte sì poco ti costa»,
 80 rispuoser tutti, «il satisfare altrui,
 felice te se sì parli a tua posta!
 Però, se campi d'esti luoghi bui
 e torni a riveder le belle stelle,
 quando ti gioverà dicere "I' fui",
 fa che di noi a la gente favelle».

Indi rupper la rota, e a fuggirsi
 ali sembiar le gambe loro isnelle.
 Un amen non saria possuto dirsi
 tosto così com' e' fuoro spariti;

90 per ch'al maestro parve di partirsi.
 Io lo seguiva, e poco eravam iti,
 che 'l suon de l'acqua n'era sì vicino,
 che per parlar saremmo a pena uditi.
 Come quel fiume c'ha proprio cammino
 prima dal Monte Viso 'nver' levante,
 da la sinistra costa d'Apennino,
 che si chiama Acquacheta suso, avanti
 che si divalli giù nel basso letto,
 e a Forlì di quel nome è vacante,

100 rimbomba là sovra San Benedetto
 de l'Alpe per cadere ad una scesa
 ove dovria per mille esser recetto;
 così, giù d'una ripa discoscesa,
 trovammo risonar quell'acqua tinta,
 sì che 'n poc' ora avria l'orecchia offesa.

Io avea una corda intorno cinta,
 e con essa pensai alcuna volta
 prender la lonza a la pelle dipinta.
 Poscia ch'io l'ebbi tutta da me sciolta,
 110 sì come 'l duca m'avea comandato,
 porsila a lui aggroppata e ravvolta.

O Florence, and sudden profits, have led to pride
And excess that you already mourn!" I spoke
With face uplifted; the three, who understood,

Then looked at one another with the look
Of men who hear the truth. "If times occur,"
They all replied, "when it again will take

70 So little effort to answer another's desire,
Count yourself happy speaking as you wish.
Therefore, if you escape from this dark sphere

To see the beauty of the stars, and relish
The pleasure then of saying, 'I was there'—
Speak word of us to others." Then in a rush

They broke their wheel, and as they fled, the blur
Of legs resembled wings; it took less time
Than saying "Amen" for them to disappear.

And then my master left, I after him;
80 And we had traveled but a little distance
Before the sound of falling water came

From so near we could scarcely hear our voices.
As the river which is first to carve its course
East down the Apennines from Viso's sources—

Called Acquacheta up high, before it pours
To its low bed at Forlì—clears the spine
Above San Benedetto dell'Alpe and roars

In a single cataract that might have been
A thousand; just so, down a precipitous bank,
90 Dark water drummed so loudly it would pain

Our ears before much longer. I had a hank
Of cord wrapped round me—with it I had planned
To take the leopard with the painted flank;

I loosed it from me at my master's command
And passed it to him, knotted and coiled up.
Turning to the right he flung it from his hand

Ond' ei si volse inver' lo destro lato,
 e alquanto di lunge da la sponda
 la gittò giuso in quell'alto burrato.
 'E' pur convien che novità risponda',
 dicea fra me medesmo, 'al novo cenno
 che 'l maestro con l'occhio sì seconda'.
 Ahi quanto cauti li uomini esser dianno
 presso a color che non veggion pur l'ovra,
 120 ma per entro i pensier miran col senno!
 El disse a me: «Tosto verrà di sovra
 ciò ch'io attendo e che il tuo pensier sogna;
 tosto convien ch'al tuo viso si scovra».

Sempre a quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna
 de' l'uom chiuder le labbra fin ch'el puote,
 però che senza colpa fa vergogna;
 ma qui tacer nol posso; e per le note
 di questa comedia, lettor, ti giuro,
 s'elle non sien di lunga grazia vòte.
 130 ch'i' vidi per quell' aere grosso e scuro
 venir notando una figura in suso,
 maravigliosa ad ogne cor sicuro,
 sì come torna colui che va giuso
 talora a solver l'àncora ch'aggrappa
 o scoglio o altro che nel mare è chiuso,
 che 'n sù si stende e da piè si rattappa.

Some distance off the edge and down the slope,
Into the depth of the abyss. I thought,
“Some strangeness surely will answer from the deep

100 The strange signal the master just set out,
And follows so attentively with his eye”—
One must take care with those who have the wit

Not only to observe the action, but see
The thought as well! For, “Soon now will arise
The thing I look for: soon,” he said to me,

“What your mind dreams will be before your eyes.”
A man should close his lips, if he’s able to,
When faced by truth that has the face of lies,

But here I cannot be silent; reader, I vow
110 By my *Commedia*’s lines—so may they not fail
Of lasting favor—that as I was peering through

That murky air, a shape swam up to instill
Amazement in the firmest heart: a thing
Rising the way a man who dives to pull

His anchor free from shoals it is caught among,
Or something else hidden in the sea, with feet
Drawn in beneath him, surges—surfacing

Back from the deep with both arms held up straight.

- «Ecco la fiera con la coda aguzza,
che passa i monti e rompe i muri e l'armi!
Ecco colei che tutto 'l mondo appuzza!».

Sì cominciò lo mio duca a parlarmi;
e accennolle che venisse a proda,
vicino al fin d'i passeggiati marmi.
E quella sozza imagine di froda
sen venne, e arrivò la testa e 'l busto,
ma 'n su la riva non trasse la coda.
- 10 La faccia sua era faccia d'uom giusto,
tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle,
e d'un serpente tutto l'altro fusto;
due branche avea pilose insin l'ascelle;
lo dosso e 'l petto e ambedue le coste
dipinti avea di nodi e di rotelle.
Con più color, sommesse e sovraposte
non fer mai drappi Tartari né Turchi,
né fuor tai tele per Aragne imposte.
- 20 Come talvolta stanno a riva i burchi,
che parte sono in acqua e parte in terra,
e come là tra li Tedeschi lurchi
lo bivero s'assetta a far sua guerra,
così la fiera pessima si stava
su l'orlo che di pietra il sabbion serra.
Nel vano tutta sua coda guizzava,
torcendo in sù la venenosa forza
ch'a guisa di scorpion la punta armava.
- Lo duca disse: «Or convien che si torca
la nostra via un poco insino a quella
30 bestia malvagia che colà si corca».
Però scendemmo a la destra mammella,
e diece passi femmo in su lo stremo,
per ben cessar la rena e la fiammella.
E quando noi a lei venuti semo,
poco più oltre veggio in su la rena
gente seder propinqua al loco scemo.

CANTO XVII

“Behold the beast that has the pointed tail,
That crosses mountains, leaves walls and weapons broken,
And makes the stench of which the world is full!”

So did my leader address me, then paused to beckon
Him ashore near where the causeway came to an end.
And fraud’s foul emblem came closer, till he had taken

His head and chest from the deep to rest on land
Before us, not drawing his tail up onto the bank.
His face was a just man’s face, outwardly kind,

10 And he was like a serpent all down his trunk.
He had two paws, both hairy to the armpits;
His back and breast and both sides down to the shank

Were painted with designs of knots and circlets.
No Tartar or Turk has ever woven a cloth
More colored in field and figure, nor were the nets

Arachne loomed. The way beached boats are both
On land and partly in water, or the way
The beaver squats to battle fish to the death

20 In the deep-drinking Germans’ land—so lay
That worst of beasts upon the edge of stone
That bounds the sand. His tail was quivery

And restless in the void where it hung down
Squirring its venomous fork with an upward twist,
Armed like a scorpion. “Now we must incline

Our path a little—as far as the evil beast
That crouches over there,” my master said.
So we descended on the right, and paced

Ten steps along the edge to keep well wide
Of sand and flames. Coming to where he was,
30 I saw on the sand just on from where we stood

- Quivi 'l maestro «Acciò che tutta piena
esperienza d'esto giron porti»,
mi disse, «va, e vedi la lor mena.
- 40 Li tuoi ragionamenti sian là corti;
mentre che torni, parlerò con questa,
che ne conceda i suoi omeri forti».
- Così ancor su per la strema testa
di quel settimo cerchio tutto solo
andai, dove sedea la gente mesta.
- Per li occhi fora scoppiava lor duolo;
di qua, di là soccorrien con le mani
quando a' vapori, e quando al caldo suolo:
non altrimenti fan di state i cani
- 50 or col ceffo or col piè, quando son morsi
o da pulci o da mosche o da tafani.
- Poi che nel viso a certi li occhi porsi,
ne' quali 'l doloroso foco casca,
non ne conobbi alcun; ma io m'accorsi
che dal collo a ciascun pendea una tasca
ch'avea certo colore e certo segno,
e quindi par che 'l loro occhio si pasca.
- E com' io riguardando tra lor vegno,
in una borsa gialla vidi azzurro
- 60 che d'un leone avea faccia e contegno.
- Poi, procedendo di mio sguardo il curro,
vidine un'altra come sangue rossa,
mostrando un'oca bianca più che burro.
- E un che d'una scrofa azzurra e grossa
segnato avea lo suo sacchetto bianco,
mi disse: «Che fai tu in questa fossa?²
Or te ne va; e perché se' vivo anco,
sappi che 'l mio vicin Vitaliano
sederà qui dal mio sinistro fianco.
- 70 Con questi Fiorentin son padoano:
spesse fiате mi 'ntronan li orecchi
gridando: "Vegna 'l cavalier sovrano,

Some people sitting near the open space.
The master said, "To experience this ring
Fully, go forward: learn what their state is,

But let your conversation not be long.
Till you return, I'll parley with this beast,
So we may borrow his shoulders." I went along

The seventh circle's margin alone, and passed
To where those doleful people sat. Their woes
Burst from their eyes, their hands were doing their best

40 To shield them from the torments, shifting place
From here to there—one moment from falling flames,
The next, the burning ground: just like the ways

Of dogs in summer when they scratch, sometimes
With paw and others with muzzle, they behaved
As though fleas or flies or gadflies bit their limbs.

When I grew closer to the people grieved
By the flames falling on them, I did not find
Any I recognized, but I perceived

Each had a purse hung round his neck—adorned
50 With certain colors and a certain device,
Which each of them with hungry eyes consumed.

Looking among them, I saw a yellow purse
That bore a lion in azure. Looking farther,
I saw another, blood-red, that showed a goose

Depicted in a color whiter than butter.
Then one of them—whose wallet, which was white,
Displayed a pregnant sow portrayed in azure—

Said to me: "What are you doing in this pit?
Be off with you! And since you are living, know
60 My neighbor Vitaliano will come to sit

Here on my left. These Florentines din me so
Because I am a Paduan; often they cry,
'Bring on the sovereign knight whose sack will show

che recherà la tasca con tre becchi!"».

*Qui distorse la bocca e di fuor trasse
la lingua, come bue che 'l naso lecchi.
E io, temendo no 'l più star crucciasse
lui che di poco star m'avea 'mmonito,
torna'mi in dietro da l'anime lasse.*

Trova' il duca mio ch'era salito

80 *già su la groppa del fiero animale,
e disse a me: «Or sie forte e ardito.*

*Omai si scende per sì fatte scale;
monta dinanzi, ch'i' voglio esser mezzo,
sì che la coda non possa far male».*

*Qual è colui che sì presso ha 'l riprezzo
de la quartana, c'ha già l'unghie smorte,
e triema tutto pur guardando 'l rezzo,
tal divenn' io a le parole porte;*

90 *ma vergogna mi fé le sue minacce,
che innanzi a buon signor fa servo forte.*

*I' m'assettai in su quelle spallacce;
sì volli dir, ma la voce non venne
com' io credetti: «Fa che tu m'abbracce».*

*Ma esso, ch'altra volta mi sovvenne
ad altro forse, tosto ch'i' montai
con le braccia m'avvinse e mi sostenne;*

*e disse: «Gerion, moviti omai:
le rote larghe, e lo scender sia poco;
100 pensa la nova soma che tu hai».*

*Come la navicella esce di loco
in dietro in dietro, sì quindi si tolse;
e poi ch'al tutto si sentì a gioco,
là 'v' era 'l petto, la coda rivolse,
e quella tesa, come anguilla, mosse,
e con le branche l'aere a sé raccolse.*

Three goats!’ ” With that, he twisted his mouth awry
In a perverse grimace, and like an ox
Licking its nose, thrust out his tongue at me.

Then, fearing that a longer stay might vex
Him who had cautioned that the time I spent
With them be brief, I left those worn-out souls—

70 And found my leader already on our mount,
Seated upon that savage creature’s back.
He said, “Be bold and strong; for now the descent

Must be by such a stairway. The place you take
Should be in front, so I can come between
To protect you from the tail.” Like those who shake,

Feeling the quartan fever coming on—
Their nails already blue, so that they shiver
At the mere sight of shade—such I was then;

80 But shame rebuked me, which makes a servant braver
In a good master’s presence. I took my seat
Upon those ugly shoulders. I did endeavor

(But my voice would not come the way I thought)
To say, “Be sure you hold me tight!” But he,
Who’d rescued me from other dangers, put

His two strong arms around me to steady me
As soon as I had mounted up, commanding,
“Geryon, move ahead—but carefully:

90 Keep your arcs wide; go slowly when descending;
Be mindful of this new burden that you bear.”
As a boat moves back and back, to leave its landing,

So slowly did Geryon withdraw from shore.
Then when he felt himself quite free, he turned
And brought his tail to where his foreparts were,

And stretching it out he moved it so it churned
The way a swimming eel does; and his paws
Gathered the air toward him. When Phaëthon spurned

Maggior paura non credo che fosse
 quando Fetonte abbandonò li freni,
 per che 'l ciel, come pare ancor, si cosse;
 né quando Icaro misero le reni
 110 sentì spennar per la scaldata cera,
 gridando il padre a lui «Mala via tieni!»,
 che fu la mia, quando vidi ch'i' era
 ne l'aere d'ogne parte, e vidi spenta
 ogne veduta fuor che de la fera.
 Ella sen va notando lenta lenta;
 rota e discende, ma non me n'accorgo
 se non che al viso e di sotto mi venta.
 Io sentia già da la man destra il gorgo
 far sotto noi un orribile scroscio,
 120 per che con li occhi 'n giù la testa sporgo.
 Allor fu' io più timido a lo stoscio,
 però ch'i' vidi fuochi e senti' pianti;
 ond' io tremando tutto mi raccoscio.
 E vidi poi, chè nol vedea davanti,
 lo scendere e 'l girar per li gran mali
 che s'appressavan da diversi canti.
 Come 'l falcon ch'è stato assai su l'ali,
 che senza veder logoro o uccello
 fa dire al falconiere «Omè, tu cali!»,
 130 discende lasso onde si move isnello,
 per cento rote, e da lunge si pone
 dal suo maestro, disdegnoso e fello;
 così ne puose al fondo Gerione
 al piè al piè de la stagliata rocca,
 e, discarcate le nostre persone,
 si dileguò come da corda cocca.

The reins, so that the sky as one still sees
Was scorched, I doubt that there was greater fear
(Nor when pathetic Icarus felt his thighs

100 Unfeathering from the melting wax, to hear
His father crying, "You are falling now!")
Than mine, perceiving I was in sheer air—

Surrounded by it, and realizing I saw
Nothing at all around me but the beast.
Onward he swam with motion more and more slow

As he wheeled round descending; but that I guessed
Only by feeling the wind against my face
And from below. On our right the sound increased

From the whirlpool roaring horribly under us.
110 I stretched my head out forward, looking down—
Growing more frightened even than I was,

Because as we descended I heard the din
Of lamentations and I could see the fire.
And so I shook, the more tightly holding on.

And I saw then—I had not seen it before—
That he was wheeling and making his descent,
For the great torments now were drawing near

On every side. As a falcon being sent
Stays on the wing seeing no lure or bird
120 A long while, making the falconer lament,

"Ah me, you are sinking now!"—and comes down tired,
With many wheelings, where it swiftly set out,
And alights peeved and sullen, far from its lord:

So Geryon circled and landed at the foot
Of the jagged rock; and once unburdening
His shoulders of our bodies, he did not wait,

But vanished like an arrow from the string.

- Luogo è in inferno detto Malebolge,
 tutto di pietra di color ferrigno,
 come la cerchia che dintorno il volge.
 Nel dritto mezzo del campo maligno
 vaneggia un pozzo assai largo e profondo,
 di cui suo loco dicerò l'ordigno.
 Quel cinghio che rimane adunque è tondo
 tra 'l pozzo e 'l piè de l'alta ripa dura,
 e ha distinto in dieci valli il fondo.
- 10 Quale, dove per guardia de le mura
 più e più fossi cingon li castelli,
 la parte dove son rende figura,
 tale imagine quivi facean quelli;
 e come a tai fortezze da' lor sogli
 a la ripa di fuor son ponticelli,
 così da imo de la roccia scogli
 movien che ricidien li argini e ' fossi
 infino al pozzo che i tronca e raccogli.
- 20 In questo luogo, de la schiena scossi
 di Gerion, trovammoci; e 'l poeta
 tenne a sinistra, e io dietro mi mossi.
 A la man destra vidi nova pieta,
 novo tormento e novi frustatori,
 di che la prima bolgia era repleta.
 Nel fondo erano ignudi i peccatori;
 dal mezzo in qua ci venien verso 'l volto,
 di là con noi, ma con passi maggiori,
 come i Roman per l'essercito molto,
 l'anno del giubileo, su per lo ponte
- 30 hanno a passar la gente modo colto,
 che da l'un lato tutti hanno la fronte
 verso 'l castello e vanno a Santo Pietro,
 da l'altra sponda vanno verso 'l monte.

CANTO XVIII

There is a place called Malebolge in Hell,
Constructed wholly of iron-colored stones,
Including the circumferential wall.

Right in the center of this malign field yawns
A wide deep pit: concerning its design
I shall say more in time. A belt remains

Between the base of that high wall of stone
And the central pit, a circular band divided
In ten concentric valleys, as in a plan

10 Where guardian moats successively are graded
Around a castle's walls. In such a place
A series of small bridges would be provided,

Out from the fortress threshold and across
To the last bank: just so from the rock wall's foot
Ran spokewise ridges, crossing over each fosse

And its embankment, extending to the pit
That gathers them and cuts them off. This place
Was where we found ourselves when we alit

20 From Geryon's back; the poet, leading us,
Held to the left, and I came on behind.
To my right side I saw new tortures, new woes,

And new tormentors, with whom the first ditch teemed.
Down at its bottom were naked sinners. The crowd
Massed on our side of the center paced the ground

Headed toward us, while those on the other side
Walked facing as we did, but with a greater pace:
As when the Romans, because of the multitude

Gathered for the Jubilee, had pilgrims cross
The bridge with one side kept for all those bound
30 Toward St. Peter's, facing the Castle, while those

Di qua, di là, su per lo sasso tetro
 vidi demon cornuti con gran ferze,
 che li battien crudelmente di retro.
 Ahi come facean lor levar le berze
 a le prime percosse! già nessuno
 le seconde aspettava né le terze.
 40 Mentr' io andava, li occhi miei in uno
 furo scontrati; e io sì tosto dissi:
 «Già di veder costui non son digiuno».
 Per ch'io a figurarlo i piedi affissi;
 e 'l dolce duca meco si ristette,
 e assentio ch'alquanto in dietro gissi.
 E quel frustato celar si credette
 bassando 'l viso; ma poco li valse,
 ch'io dissi: «O tu che l'occhio a terra gette,
 se le fazion che porti non son false,
 50 Venedico se' tu Caccianemico.
 Ma che ti mena a sì pungenti salse?».
 Ed elli a me: «Mal volontier lo dico;
 ma sforzami la tua chiara favella,
 che mi fa sovvenir del mondo antico.
 I' fui colui che la Ghisolabella
 condussi a far la voglia del marchese,
 come che suoni la sconcia novella.
 E non pur io qui piango bolognese;
 anzi n'è questo loco tanto pieno,
 60 che tante lingue non son ora apprese
 a dicer 'sipa' tra Sàvena e Reno;
 e se di ciò vuoi fede o testimonio,
 rècati a mente il nostro avaro seno».
 Così parlando il percosse un demonio
 de la sua scuriada, e disse: «Via,
 ruffian! qui non son femmine da conio».

Headed toward the Mount were all assigned
The other side. Along the dismal rock
In both directions, I saw demons—horned

And carrying large scourges; and they struck
Savagely from behind. Ah, at the first blow
How terribly they forced them to be quick

Lifting their heels! None waited to undergo
The second or the third. As I walked on,
One of the wretches looking from below

40 Met my eyes: instantly I said, "I have seen
This fellow before," and paused to make him out;
And my kind leader gave me leave to turn

A short way back. That tortured spirit thought
To hide himself by lowering his face,
But that did little good, and I cried out:

"You, looking at the ground there—surely if those
Features you wear are not false, you are named
Venedico Caccianemico. Say what it is

That brings you sauces of such a pungent kind."
50 And he to me: "I tell it unwillingly;
But your plain speech compels me, bringing to mind

Memories of the former world. It was I
Who brought Ghisolabella to do the will
Of the Marchese, however it may be

That the obscene history is told. But still,
I am not the only Bolognese here,
Crying in torment—in truth, the place is so full

That there are fewer tongues alive up there
Between Savena and Reno, being taught
60 How to say *sipa*; and if what you desire

Is evidence to confirm it—just give some thought
To our avaricious nature." And as he spoke,
A demon came and lashed him, crying out,

I' mi raggiunsi con la scorta mia;
 poscia con pochi passi divenimmo
 là 'v' uno scoglio de la ripa uscia.
 70 Assai leggermente quel salimmo;
 e vòlti a destra su per la sua scheggia,
 da quelle cerchie etterne ci partimmo.
 Quando noi fummo là dov' el vaneggia
 di sotto per dar passo a li sferzati,
 lo duca disse: «Attienti, e fa che feggia
 lo viso in te di quest' altri mal nati,
 ai quali ancor non vedesti la faccia
 però che son con noi insieme andati».
 Del vecchio ponte guardavam la traccia
 80 che venia verso noi da l'altra banda,
 e che la ferza similmente scaccia.
 E 'l buon maestro, senza mia dimanda,
 mi disse: «Guarda quel grande che vene,
 e per dolor non par lagrime spanda:
 quanto aspetto reale ancor ritene!
 Quelli è Iasón, che per cuore e per senno
 li Colchi del monton privati féne.
 Ello passò per l'isola di Lenno
 poi che l'ardite femmine spietate
 90 tutti li muschi loro a morte dienno.
 Ivi con segni e con parole ornate
 Isifile ingannò, la giovinetta
 che prima avea tutte l'altre ingannate.
 Lasciolla quivi, gravida, soletta;
 tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;
 e anche di Medea si fa vendetta.
 Con lui sen va chi da tal parte inganna;
 e questo basti de la prima valle
 sapere e di color che 'n sé assanna».
 100 Già eravam là 've lo stretto calle
 con l'argine secondo s'incrocicchia,
 e fa di quello ad un altr' arco spalle.
 Quindi sentimmo gente che si nicchia
 ne l'altra bolgia e che col muso scuffa,
 e sé medesma con le palme picchia.

"Get moving, pimp! This is no place to look
For women to sell!" Rejoining my escort,
I came with him to where a ridge of rock

Jutted from the bank; we climbed it without much effort,
And turning right along its craggy bridge
Left that eternal circling. We reached the part

70 Where a space yawning underneath the ridge
Gives passage to the scourged, and there he said,
"Stop: let the sight of this other great assemblage

Of ill-begotten souls impress you; they strode
The way we did, so you could not see their faces."
From the old bridge we looked down at the crowd

Filing toward us, also driven by lashes.
The kind guide said, without my questioning,
"See where that great one sheds, as he advances,

30 No tears for pain—how much the look of a king
He still keeps! He is Jason, who took the ram
Of Colchis by courage and canny reckoning.

He passed the isle of Lemnos after the time
When its bold, pitiless women killed every male;
His deceitful gifts and fair words overcame

The young Hypsipyle there, who'd had the skill
To deceive the rest. He left her great with child,
Forlorn; and such guilt brings him torment in Hell,

Avenging Medea as well. With him are sealed
All those who cheat such ways: let this suffice
90 For the first valley, and knowledge of those held

Between its jaws." We had now reached the place
At which the narrow pathway cuts across
The second bank, the shoulder of which supplies

The abutment for another arch's base.
Now we could hear the sounds of people's screams
From the next fosse's pocket, and the noise

Le ripe eran grommate d'una muffa,
 per l'alito di giù che vi s'appasta,
 che con li occhi e col naso facea zuffa.
 Lo fondo è cupo sì, che non ci basta
 110 loco a veder senza montare al dosso
 de l'arco, ove lo scoglio più sovrasta.
 Quivi venimmo; e quindi giù nel fosso
 vidi gente attuffata in uno sterco
 che da li uman privadi pareva mosso.
 E mentre ch'io là giù con l'occhio cerco,
 vidi un col capo sì di merda lordo,
 che non parëa s'era laico o cherco.
 Quei mi sgridò: «Perché se' tu sì gordo
 di riguardar più me che li altri brutti?».
 120 E io a lui: «Perché, se ben ricordo,
 già t'ho veduto coi capelli asciutti,
 e se' Alessio Interminei da Lucca:
 però t'adocchio più che li altri tutti».
 Ed elli allor, battendosi la zucca:
 «Qua giù m'hanno sommerso le lusinghe
 ond'io non ebbi mai la lingua stucca».
 Appresso ciò lo duca «Fa che pinghe»,
 mi disse, «il viso un poco più avanti,
 sì che la faccia ben con l'occhio attinghe
 130 di quella sozza e scapigliata fante
 che là si graffia con l'unghie merdose,
 e or s'accoscia e ora è in piedi stante.
 Taïde è, la puttana che rispuose
 al drudo suo quando disse "Ho io grazie
 grandi apo te?": "Anzi maravigliose!"
 E quinci sian le nostre viste sazie».

Made by their puffing snouts and by their palms
As they struck themselves. The banks were caked with mold
That clings there, formed by an exhalation that steams

100 From down below, offensive to behold
And to inhale. The bottom is so far down
That we could nowhere see it until we scaled

The ridge's high point at the arch's crown.
When we had reached it, I saw deep down in the fosse
People immersed in filth that seemed to drain

From human privies. Searching it with my eyes
I saw one there whose head was so befouled
With shit, you couldn't tell which one he was—

110 Layman or cleric. Looking at me, he howled,
“And why are you so greedy to look at me
When all of these are just as filthy?” I called:

“Because, if memory serves me properly,
I saw you once when your hair was dry, before—
I know you are Alessio Interminei

Of Lucca, which is why I eye you more
Than all the rest.” And he then, beating his head:
“Down here is where my flatteries, that store

120 With which my tongue seemed never to be cloyed,
Have sunk me.” Then my leader gave me advice:
“Extend your gaze a little farther ahead,

So that your eyes may fully observe the face
Of that disheveled strumpet who in the mire
Scratches her body, as she stands or squats,

With shit-rimmed fingers—she is Thaïs, the whore
Who, asked, ‘*And is my favor with you great?*’
Replied, ‘*Enormous,*’ to her paramour—

And let our sight be satisfied with that.”

- O Simon mago, o miseri seguaci
 che le cose di Dio, che di bontate
 deon essere spose, e voi rapaci
 per oro e per argento avolterate,
 or convien che per voi suoni la tromba,
 però che ne la terza bolgia state.
 Già eravamo, a la seguente tomba,
 montati de lo scoglio in quella parte
 ch'a punto sovra mezzo 'l fosso piomba.
- 10 O somma sapienza, quanta è l'arte
 che mostri in cielo, in terra e nel mal mondo,
 e quanto giusto tua virtù comparte!
 Io vidi per le coste e per lo fondo
 piena la pietra livida di fóri,
 d'un largo tutti e ciascun era tondo.
 Non mi parean men ampi né maggiori
 che que' che son nel mio bel San Giovanni,
 fatti per loco d'i battezzatori;
 l'un de li quali, ancor non è molt' anni,
- 20 rupp' io per un che dentro v'annegava:
 e questo sia suggel ch' ogn'omo sganni.
 Fuor de la bocca a ciascun soperchiava
 d'un peccator li piedi e de le gambe
 infino al grosso, e l'altro dentro stava.
 Le piante erano a tutti accese intrambe;
 per che sì forte guizzavan le giunte,
 che spezzate averien ritorte e strambe.
 Qual suole il fiammeggiar de le cose unte
 muoversi pur su per la strema buccia,
 30 tal era lì daì calcagni a le punte.
 «Chi è colui, maestro, che sì cruccia
 guizzando più che li altri suoi consorti»,
 diss' io, «e cui più roggia fiamma succia?».
 Ed elli a me: «Se tu vuo' ch'ì ti porti
 là giù per quella ripa che più giace,
 da lui saprai di sé e de' suoi torti».

CANTO XIX

O Simon Magus, and O you wretched crowd
Of those who follow him and prostitute
In your rapacity the things of God

Which should be brides of righteousness, to get
Silver and gold—it is time the trumpet sounded
For you: the third pouch is where you are put.

Now we were at the next tomb, having ascended
To where the ridge hangs over the fosse's middle.
O Supreme Wisdom, your mighty art is extended

10 Through Heaven, on earth, and in the world of evil,
And with what justice is your Power assigned!
I saw that the livid stone which lined the channel,

Both walls and floor, was full of holes, all round
And of an equal size. They seemed to me
Not any wider or smaller than those designed

For the baptizings in my fair San Giovanni—
One of which many years ago I broke,
To save one drowning there: and let this be

20 My seal to clear the matter. From each hole stuck
A sinner's feet and legs: the rest of him,
From the calf up, inside. They twitched and shook

Because the soles of both feet were aflame—
So violently, it seemed their joints could burst
Rope or snap withes. As flames on oil will skim

Across the surface, so here the quick fire coursed
From heel to toe. "Master," I asked, "tell me,
Who is that one who seems to squirm the worst

And to be sucked by the reddest flames?" And he:
"If you desire for me to carry you there,
30 By that bank sloping down more gradually,

E io: «Tanto m'è bel, quanto a te piace:
 tu se' signore, e sai ch'ì' non mi parto
 dal tuo volere, e sai quel che si tace».

40 *Allor venimmo in su l'argine quarto;*
volgemmo e discendemmo a mano stanca
là giù nel fondo foracchiato e arto.
Lo buon maestro ancor de la sua anca
non mi dipuose, sì mi giunse al rotto
di quel che sì piangeva con la zanca.
«O qual che se' che 'l di sù tien di sotto,
anima trista come pal commessa»,
comincia' io a dir, «se puoi, fa motto».
Io stava come 'l frate che confessa

50 *lo perfido assessin, che, poi ch'è fitto,*
richiama lui per che la morte cessa.
Ed el gridò: «Se' tu già costì ritto,
se' tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?
Di parecchi anni mi mentì lo scritto.
Se' tu sì tosto di quell' aver sazio
per lo qual non temesti tòrre a 'nganno
la bella donna, e poi di farne strazio?».
Tal mi fec' io, quai son color che stanno,
per non intender ciò ch'è lor risposto,

60 *quasi scornati, e risponder non sanno.*
Allor Virgilio disse: «Dilli tosto:
“Non son colui, non son colui che credi”»;
e io rispuosi come a me fu imposto.
Per che lo spirto tutti storse i piedi;
poi, sospirando e con voce di pianto,
mi disse: «Dunque che a me richiedi?
Se di saper ch'ì' sia ti cal cotanto,
che tu abbi però la ripa corsa,
sappi ch'ì' fui vestito del gran manto;

Then you can speak with him directly and hear
From him about himself and his misdeeds."
And I: "I like what pleases you. You are

My lord, you know I follow where your will leads—
You also know the things I leave unsaid."
Then we came onto the fourth dike; where its sides

Slope down we descended to our left, and stood
Upon its narrow, perforated floor,
My master not releasing me from his side

40 Until he reached the hole of that sufferer
Whose legs thrashed out such sorrow. I began,
"O miserable soul, whoever you are,

Planted here like a fence post upside down:
Speak, if you can." I stood as does the friar
Who has confessed a vile assassin—head down,

And tied in place—who calls him back to defer
Death for a little while; and then he cried,
"Boniface, are you already standing there—

Already standing there? The writing lied
50 By several years! Are you so soon replete
With all that getting, for which you weren't afraid

To take the beautiful Lady by deceit,
And then to do her outrage?" I became
Like those who, feeling laughed at, hesitate,

Not comprehending what's been said to them
And helpless to reply. Then Virgil said,
"Answer him quickly: say you are not him,

Not who he thinks." I spoke as I was bid,
At which the shade squirmed hard with both his feet;
60 Then, sighing and in a mournful voice, replied,

"What do you ask me, then? If you were brought
Down from the bank to discover who I am,
Then know that I was vested with the great

70 *e veramente fui figliuol de l'orsa,
 cupido sì per avanzar li orsatti,
 che sù l'avere e qui me misi in borsa.*
Di sotto al capo mio son li altri tratti
che precedetter me simoneggiando,
per le fessure de la pietra piatti.
Là giù cascherò io altresì quando
verrà colui ch'i' credea che tu fossi,
allor ch'i' feci 'l sùbito dimando.
Ma più è 'l tempo già che i piè mi cossi
 80 *e ch'i' son stato così sottosopra,*
ch'el non starà piantato coi piè rossi:
ché dopo lui verrà di più laida opra,
di ver' ponente, un pastor senza legge,
tal che convien che lui e me ricuopra.
Nuovo Iasón sarà, di cui si legge
ne' Maccabei; e come a quel fu molle
suo re, così fia lui chi Francia regge».
Io non so s'i' mi fui qui troppo folle,
ch'i' pur rispuosi lui a questo metro:
 90 *«Deh, or mi di: quanto tesoro volle*
Nostro Signore in prima da san Pietro
ch'ei ponesse le chiavi in sua balia?
Certo non chiese se non «Viemmi retro».
Né Pier né li altri tolsero a Matia
oro od argento, quando fu sortito
al loco che perdé l'anima ria.
Però ti sta, ché tu se' ben punito;
e guarda ben la mal tolta moneta
ch'esser ti fece contra Carlo ardito.
 100 *E se non fosse ch'ancor lo mi vieta*
la reverenza de le somme chiavi
che tu tenesti ne la vita lieta,

Mantle of power; a son who truly came
Out of the she-bear, I longed so much to advance
The cubs that filling my purse was my great aim—

And here I have pursed myself, to my expense.
Beneath my head are souls who preceded me
In simony, mashed flat and squeezed through dense

70 Layers of fissured rock. I too shall lie
Pushed down in turn when that other one has come:
My abrupt question assumed that you were he.

But already longer is the span of time
I have been cooking my feet while planted reversed
Than he, feet scarlet, will be planted the same:

For then a lawless shepherd of the west
Will follow him, of uglier deeds, well chosen
For covering him and me when both are pressed

Under his skull. He'll be a second Jason,
80 And as the first, so Maccabees recounts,
Was treated softly by his monarch, this one

Will get soft treatment from the King of France.”
In my reply, I don't know if I erred
With too much boldness in my vehemence:

“Pray tell me: how much treasure did our Lord
Ask of Saint Peter before He put the keys
Into his keeping? Surely He required

Nothing but ‘Follow me.’ Neither did those
With Peter, or Peter himself, take silver or gold
90 From Matthias, who was chosen for that place

Lost by the guilty soul. Stay where you're held,
For these are your deserved punishments—
Guard well the ill-earned gains that made you bold

In opposing Charles. Except that reverence
For the great keys you held in the happy life
Forbids, my speech would be still more intense:

io userei parole ancor più gravi;
 ch  la vostra avarizia il mondo attrista,
 calcando i buoni e sollevando i pravi.
 Di voi pastor s'accorse il Vangelista,
 quando colei che siede sopra l'acque
 puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista;
 quella che con le sette teste nacque,
 110 e da le diece corna ebbe argomento,
 fin che virtute al suo marito piacque.
 Fatto v'avete dio d'oro e d'argento;
 e che altro   da voi a l'idolatre,
 se non ch'elli uno, e voi ne orate cento?
 Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre,
 non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
 che da te prese il primo ricco padre!».

E mentr' io li cantava cotai note,
 o ira o coscienza che 'l mordesse,
 120 forte spingava con ambo le piote.
 I' credo ben ch'al mio duca piacesse,
 con s  contenta labbia sempre attese
 lo suon de le parole vere espresse.
 Per  con ambo le braccia mi prese;
 e poi che tutto su mi s'ebbe al petto,
 rimont  per la via onde discese.
 N  si stanc  d'avermi a s  distretto,
 s  men port  sovra 'l colmo de l'arco
 che dal quarto al quinto argine   tragetto.

130 Quivi soavemente spuose il carco,
 soave per lo scoglio sconcio ed erto
 che sarebbe a le capre duro varco.
 Indi un altro vallon mi fu scoperto.

For avarice like yours distributes grief,
Afflicting the world by trampling on the good
And raising the wicked. Shepherds like yourself

100 The Evangelist intended, when he said
That she who sits upon the waters was seen
By him in fornication with kings. She had

Seven heads from birth, and from ten horns had drawn
Her strength—so long as virtue pleased her spouse.
You made a god of gold and silver: wherein

Is it you differ from the idolatrous—
Save that you worship a hundred, they but one?
Ah Constantine! What measure of wickedness

Stems from that mother—not your conversion, I mean:
110 Rather the dowry that the first rich Father
Accepted from you!” And while I sang this strain,

Whether he felt the bite of conscience, or anger,
He kicked out hard with both his feet; indeed,
I think my guide approved, with a look of pleasure

Listening to the sound of true words said.
And then he lifted me in his arms again,
My weight full on his chest; and when he had,

He climbed the same path he had taken down;
Nor did he tire while holding me embraced
120 But carried me to the summit of the span

From the fourth dike to the fifth, then gently released
His burden—gently because the passage was hard,
So steep and rocky that goats might be hard pressed;

And there before me another valley appeared.

- Di nova pena mi conven far versi
 e dar materia al ventesimo canto
 de la prima canzon, ch'è d'i sommersi.
 Io era già disposto tutto quanto
 a riguardar ne lo scoperto fondo,
 che si bagnava d'angoscioso pianto;
 e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
 venir, tacendo e lagrimando, al passo
 che fanno le letane in questo mondo.
 10 Come 'l viso mi scese in lor più basso,
 mirabilmente apparve esser travolto
 ciascun tra 'l mento e 'l principio del casso,
 ché da le reni era tornato 'l volto,
 e in dietro venir li convenia,
 perché 'l veder dinanzi era lor tolto.
 Forse per forza già di parlasia
 si travolse così alcun del tutto;
 ma io nol vidi, né credo che sia.
 Se Dio ti lasci, lettor, prender frutto
 20 di tua lezione, or pensa per te stesso
 com' io potea tener lo viso asciutto,
 quando la nostra imagine di presso
 vidi sì torta, che 'l pianto de li occhi
 le natiche bagnava per lo fesso.
 Certo io piangea, poggiato a un de' rocchi
 del duro scoglio, sì che la mia scorta
 mi disse: «Ancor se' tu de li altri sciocchi?
 Qui vive la pietà quand' è ben morta;
 30 chi è più scellerato che colui
 che al giudicio divin passion comporta?»

CANTO XX

The new pains of Hell that I saw next demand
New lines for this Canto XX of the first Canzon,
Which is of those submerged in the underground.

Readying myself at the cliff's brink, I looked down
Into the canyon my master had revealed
And saw that it was watered by tears of pain:

All through the circular valley I beheld
A host of people coming, weeping but mute.
They walked at a solemn pace that would be called

10 Liturgical here above. But as my sight
Moved down their bodies, I sensed a strange distortion
That made the angle of chin and chest not right—

The head was twisted backwards: some cruel torsion
Forced face toward kidneys, and the people strode
Backwards, because deprived of forward vision.

Perhaps some time a palsy has wrung the head
Of a man straight back like these, or a terrible stroke—
But I've never seen one do so, and doubt it could.

Reader (God grant you benefit of this book)
20 Try to imagine, yourself, how I could have kept
Tears of my own from falling for the sake

Of our human image so grotesquely reshaped,
Contorted so the eyes' tears fell to wet
The buttocks at the cleft. Truly I wept,

Leaning on an outcrop of that rocky site,
And my master spoke to me: "Do you suppose
You are above with the other fools even yet?"

Here, pity lives when it is dead to these.
Who could be more impious than one who'd dare
30 To sorrow at the judgment God decrees?

- Drizza la testa, drizza, e vedi a cui
s'aperse a li occhi d'i Teban la terra;
per ch'ei gridavan tutti: "Dove rui,
Anfiarao? perché lasci la guerra?"*
*E non restò di ruinare a valle
fino a Minòs che ciascheduno afferra.*
*Mira c'ha fatto petto de le spalle;
perché volse veder troppo davante,
di retro guarda e fa retroso calle.*
40 *Vedi Tiresia, che mutò sembiente
quando di maschio femmina divenne,
cangiandosi le membra tutte quante;
e prima, poi, ribatter li convenne
li duo serpenti avvolti, con la verga,
che riavesse le maschili penne.*
*Aronta è quel ch'al ventre li s'atterga,
che ne' monti di Luni, dove ronca
lo Carrarese che di sotto alberga,
ebbe tra ' bianchi marmi la spelonca*
50 *per sua dimora; onde a guardar le stelle
e 'l mar non li era la veduta tronca.*
*E quella che ricuopre le mammelle,
che tu non vedi, con le trecce sciolte,
e ha di là ogni pilosa pelle,*
*Manto fu, che cercò per terre molte;
poscia si puose là dove nacqu' io;
onde un poco mi piace che m'ascolte.*
*Poscia che 'l padre suo di vita uscìo
e venne serva la città di Baco,*
60 *questa gran tempo per lo mondo gio.*
*Suso in Italia bella giace un laco,
a piè de l'Alpe che serra Lamagna
sovra Tiralli, c'ha nome Benaco.*
*Per mille fonti, credo, e più si bagna
tra Garda e Val Camonica e Pennino
de l'acqua che nel detto laco stagna.*
*Loco è nel mezzo là dove 'l trentino
pastore e quel di Brescia e 'l veronese
segnar poria, s'e' fesse quel cammino.*
70 *Siede Peschiera, bello e forte arnese
da fronteggiar Bresciani e Bergamaschi,
ove la riva 'ntorno più discese.*

Raise your head—raise it and see one walking near
For whom the earth split open before the eyes
Of all the Thebans. ‘Why are you leaving the war,

Amphiaraus,’ the others shouted, ‘what place
Are you rushing to?’ as he plunged down the crevice
To Minos, who seizes all. See Amphiaraus

Making his shoulders his breast; because his purpose
Was seeing too far ahead, he looks behind
And stumbles backwards. And here is Tiresias—

40 The seer who changed from male to female, unmanned
Through all his body until the day he struck
A second time with his staff at serpents entwined

And resumed his manly plumage. He with his back
Shoved nose to the other’s front is called Aruns.
Living on the slopes the Carrarese work

From villages below, he had clear vistas:
From his cave among white marble he could scan
The stars, or gaze at waves below in the distance.

And she, whose loose hair covers her breasts unseen
50 On the side away from you, where other hair grows,
Was Manto—who searched through many lands, and then

Settled in the place where I was born. Of this,
Hear me awhile: her father dead, and Bacchus’s
City enslaved, she for a long time chose

To roam the world. Where a wall of mountains rises
To form fair Italy’s border above Tirolo
Lies Lake Benaco, fed by a thousand sources:

Garda and Val Camonica and Pennino
Are watered by streams that settle in that lake.
60 The island amid it the pastors of Trentino,

Brescia, or Verona might bless, if they should take
A way that leads there. At the shore’s low place,
Peschiera’s splendid fortress towers make

Ivi convien che tutto quanto caschi
 ciò che 'n grembo a Benaco star non può,
 e fassi fiume giù per verdi paschi.
 Tosto che l'acqua a correr mette co,
 non più Benaco, ma Mencio si chiama
 fino a Governol, dove cade in Po.
 Non molto ha corso, ch'el trova una lama,
 80 ne la qual si distende e la 'mpaluda;
 e suol di state talor esser grama.
 Quindi passando la vergine cruda
 vide terra, nel mezzo del pantano,
 senza coltura e d'abitanti nuda.
 Lì, per fuggire ogni consorzio umano,
 ristette coi suoi servi a far sue arti,
 e visse, e vi lasciò suo corpo vano.
 Li uomini poi che 'ntorno erano sparti
 s'accolsero a quel loco, ch'era forte
 90 per lo pantan ch'avea da tutte parti.
 Fer la città sovra quell'ossa morte;
 e per colei che 'l loco prima elesse,
 Mantüa l'appellar sanz' altra sorte.
 Già fuor le genti sue dentro più spesse,
 prima che la mattia da Casalodi
 da Pinamonte inganno ricevesse.
 Però t'assenno che, se tu mai odi
 originar la mia terra altrimenti,
 la verità nulla menzogna frodi».
 100 E io: «Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti
 mi son sì certi e prendon sì mia fede,
 che li altri mi sarien carboni spenti.
 Ma dimmi, de la gente che procede,
 se tu ne vedi alcun degno di nota;
 ché solo a ciò la mia mente rifiede».
 Allor mi disse: «Quel che da la gota
 porge la barba in su le spalle brune.
 fu—quando Grecia fu di maschi vòta,
 sì ch'a pena rimaser per le cune—
 110 augure, e diede 'l punto con Calcantia
 in Aulide a tagliar la prima fune.
 Euripilo ebbe nome, e così 'l canta
 l'alta mia tragedia in alcun loco:
 ben lo sai tu che la sai tutta quanta.

Their challenge to the Brescians and Bergamese.
There, all the cascades Benaco cannot contain
Within its bosom join in one river that flows

Through rich green pasture. As soon as it starts to run,
The water, Benaco no more, is Mincio instead,
And joining the Po at Govèrnolo, it soon

70 Spreads to a marsh—in summer, sometimes fetid.
There Manto the savage virgin saw in mid-fen
A stretch of dry land, untilled, uninhabited:

And there she stayed and lived, where she could shun
All humans to ply her arts in a place she shared
Only with servants. And when her life was gone

And her soul descended, there its shell was interred.
Afterward, families scattered about that country
Gathered where marsh on all sides made a ward

80 Against attackers. And when they built their city
Over her bones, with no lots or divination
They named it Mantua. Before fool Casalodi

Was deceived by Pinamonte, its population
Was larger. So let no other history,
I charge you, belie my city's true inception."

I: "Master, your speech inspires such certainty
And confidence that any contradiction
Of what you say would be dead coals to me.

But speak again of these souls in sad procession:
Are any passing below us worthy of note?
90 For my mind keeps turning back in that direction."

Then he: "That one, whose beard has spread in a mat
That covers his brown shoulders, was augur when Greece
Was short of males. He divined the time to cut

The first ship's cable at Aulis, along with Calchas.
His name, as my tragedy sings—you who know it
Entirely know the passage—is Eurypylus.

Quell'altro che ne' fianchi è così poco,
 Michele Scotto fu, che veramente
 de le magiche frode seppe 'l gioco.
 Vedi Guido Bonatti; vedi Asdente,
 ch'averè inteso al cuoio e a lo spago
 ora vorrebbe, ma tardi si pente.
 Vedi le triste che lasciaron l'ago,
 la spuola e 'l fuso, e fecersi 'ndivine;
 fecer malie con erbe e con imago.
 Ma vienne omai, ché già tiene 'l confine
 d'amendue li emisperi e tocca l'onda
 sotto Sobilia Caino e le spine;
 e già iernotte fu la luna tonda:
 ben ten de' ricordar, ché non ti nocque
 alcuna volta per la selva fonda».

120
 130 Sì mi parlava, e andavamo introcque.

That other with skinny flanks is Michael Scot,
Who truly knew the game of magic fraud.
See Guido Bonatti; and Asdente—too late,

100 He wishes he'd stuck to leather and cobbler's thread,
Repenting here his celebrated predictions.
And this wretched crowd of women all chose to trade

Loom, spindle and thimble for the telling of fortunes,
Potions, wax images, incantation and charm.
But come: already, Cain-in-the-moon positions

Both hemispheres with his pale blue thorns, his term
Closes in the waves below Seville—the round moon
That, deep in the wood last night, brought you no harm.”

Even while he spoke the words, we were moving on.

- Così di ponte in ponte, altro parlando
 che la mia comedia cantar non cura,
 venimmo; e tenavamo 'l colmo, quando
 restammo per veder l'altra fessura
 di Malebolge e li altri pianti vani;
 e vidila mirabilmente oscura.
 Quale ne l'arzanà de' Viniziani
 bolle l'inverno la tenace pece
 a rimpalmare i legni lor non sani,
 10 *ché* navicar non ponno—in quella vece
 chi fa suo legno novo e chi ristoppa
 le coste a quel che più viaggi fece;
 chi ribatte da proda e chi da poppa;
 altri fa remi e altri volge sarte;
 chi terzeruolo e artimon rintoppa—:
 tal, non per foco ma per divin' arte,
 bollià là giuso una pegola spessa,
 che 'nviscava la ripa d'ogne parte.
 I' vedea lei, ma non vedëa in essa
 20 mai che le bolle che 'l bollor levava,
 e gonfiar tutta, e riseder compressa.
 Mentr' io là giù fisamente mirava,
 lo duca mio, dicendo «Guarda, guarda!»
 mi trasse a sé del loco dov' io stava.
 Allor mi volsi come l'uom cui tarda
 di veder quel che li convien fuggire
 e cui paura sùbita sgagliarda,
 che, per veder, non indugia 'l partire:
 e vidi dietro a noi un diavol nero
 30 correndo su per lo scoglio venire.
 Ahi quant' elli era ne l'aspetto fero!
 e quanto mi pareva ne l'atto acerbo,
 con l'ali aperte e sovra i piè leggero!

CANTO XXI

And so we went from bridge to bridge, and spoke
Of things which my *Commedia* does not mean
To sing. We reached the summit, stopping to look

At the next fissure of Malebolge, the vain
Lamenting that was next—and what I beheld
Was an astounding darkness. As is done

In winter, when the sticky pitch is boiled
In the Venetian Arsenal to caulk
Their unsound vessels while no ship can be sailed,

10 And so instead one uses the time to make
His ship anew, another one repairs
Much-voyaged ribs, and some with hammers strike

The prow, and some the stern; and this one makes oars
While that one might twist rope, another patch
The jib and mainsail—so, not by any fires

But by some art of Heaven, a heavy pitch
Was boiling there below, which overglued
The banks on every side. I saw that much,

But could see nothing in it but the flood
20 Of bubbles the boiling raised, and the whole mass
Swelling and settling. While I stared down, my guide,

Crying, “Watch out!—watch out!” pulled me across
Toward him from where I stood. I turned my head
Like someone eager to find out what it is

He must avoid, who finding himself dismayed
By sudden fear, while he is turning back
Does not delay his flight: what I beheld

Hurrying from behind us up the rock
Was a black demon. Ah, in his looks a brute,
30 How fierce he seemed in action—running the track

L'omero suo, ch'era aguto e superbo,
 carcava un peccator con ambo l'anche,
 e quei tenea de' piè ghermito 'l nerbo.
 Del nostro ponte disse: «O Malebranche,
 ecco un de li anzian di Santa Zita!
 Mettetel sotto, ch'i' torno per anche
 40 a quella terra, che n'è ben fornita:
 ogn' uom v'è barattier, fuor che Bonturo:
 del no, per li denar, vi si fa ita».
 Là giù 'l buttò, e per lo scoglio duro
 si volse; e mai non fu mastino sciolto
 con tanta fretta a seguitar lo furo.
 Quel s'attuffò, e tornò sù convolto;
 ma i demon che del ponte avean coperchio,
 gridar: «Qui non ha loco il Santo Volto!
 qui si nuota altrimenti che nel Serchio!
 50 Però, se tu non vuo' di nostri graffi,
 non far sopra la pegola soverchio».
 Poi l'addentar con più di cento raffi,
 disser: «Coerto convien che qui balli,
 sì che, se puoi, nascosamente accaffi».
 Non altrimenti i cuoci a' lor vassalli
 fanno attuffare in mezzo la caldaia
 la carne con li uncin, perché non galli.
 Lo buon maestro «Acciò che non si paia
 che tu ci sia», mi disse, «giù t'acquatta
 60 dopo uno scheggio, ch'alcun schermo t'aia;
 e per nulla offension che mi sia fatta,
 non temer tu, ch'i' ho le cose conte,
 perch' altra volta fui a tal baratta».

With his wings held outspread, and light of foot:
Over one high sharp shoulder he had thrown
A sinner, carrying both haunches' weight

On the one side, with one hand holding on
To both the ankles. Reaching our bridge, he spoke:
"O Malebranche, here is another one

Of Santa Zita's elders! While I go back
To bring more from his homeland, thrust him below.
His city gives us an abundant stock:

40 Every citizen there except Bonturo
Practices barratry; and given cash
They can contrive a *yes* from any *no*."

He hurled the sinner down, then turned to rush
Back down the rocky crag; and no mastiff
Was ever more impatient to shake the leash

And run his fastest after a fleeing thief.
The sinner sank below, only to rise
Rump up—but demons under the bridge's shelf

Cried, "Here's no place to show your Sacred Face!
50 You're not out in the Serchio for a swim!
If you don't want to feel our hooks—like this!—

Then stay beneath the pitch." They struck at him
With over a hundred hooks, and said, "You'll need
To dance in secret here—so grab what scam

You're able to, in darkness." Then they did
Just as cooks have their scullions do to steep
The meat well into the cauldron—with a prod

From their forks keeping it from floating up.
My good guide said, "So it will not be seen
60 That you are here, find some jagged outcrop

And crouch behind it to give yourself a screen.
No matter what offenses they offer me,
Do not be frightened: I know how things are done

Poscia passò di là dal co del ponte;
 e com' el giunse in su la ripa sesta,
 mestier li fu d'aver sicura fronte.
 Con quel furore e con quella tempesta
 ch'escono i cani a dosso al poverello
 che di sùbito chiede ove s'arresta,
 70 usciron quei di sotto al ponticello,
 e volser contra lui tutt' i runcigli;
 ma el gridò: «Nessun di voi sia fello!
 Innanzi che l'uncin vostro mi pigli,
 traggasi avante l'un di voi che m'oda,
 e poi d'arruncigliarmi si consigli».
 Tutti gridaron: «Vada Malacoda!»;
 per ch'un si mosse—e li altri stetter fermi—
 e venne a lui dicendo: «Che li approda?».
 «Credi tu, Malacoda, qui vedermi
 80 esser venuto», disse 'l mio maestro,
 «sicuro già da tutti vostri schermi,
 senza voler divino e fato destro?
 Lascian' andar, ché nel cielo è voluto
 ch'i' mostri altrui questo cammin silvestro».
 Allor li fu l'orgoglio sì caduto,
 ch'e' si lasciò cascar l'uncino a' piedi,
 e disse a li altri: «Omai non sia feruto».
 E 'l duca mio a me: «O tu che siedi
 tra li scheggion del ponte quatto quatto,
 90 sicuramente omai a me ti riedi».
 Per ch'io mi mossi e a lui venni ratto;
 e i diavoli si fecer tutti avanti,
 sì ch'io temetti ch'ei tenesser patto;
 così vid' io già temer li fanti
 ch'uscivan patteggiati di Caprona,
 veggendo sé tra nemici cotanti.

Here—once before I was in such a fray.”

And then he passed beyond the bridge’s head,
And coming to the sixth bank suddenly

He needed to keep a steady front. They bayed
And rushed at him with all the rage and uproar
Of dogs that charge some wretched vagabond

70 Who suddenly is forced to plead; they tore
From under the bridge and raised their forks at him;
But he cried, “Not so savage!—before you dare

To touch me with your forks, choose one to come
Forward to hear me out, and then decide
Whether to hook me.” They all cried out one name:

“Let Malacoda go!” So the others stood
While one strode forward to him, sneering, “What
Good will it do him?” So my master said,

80 “Do you, O Malacoda, think I could get
Through all of your defenses safely as this
Except by Heaven’s will and happy fate?

Now let us pass—for Heaven also decrees
That I should show another this savage road.”
The demon’s pride fell so much he let loose

His hook, which fell down at his feet, and said:
“Now no one strike him.” To me, my leader called,
“Now you may come back safely to my side,

90 You who crouch squatting behind the splintered shield
Of stone, upon the bridge.” At this I stirred
And quickly joined him—and the devils milled

Toward us, pressing forward, so that I feared
They might not keep the pact. So I once saw
The soldiers frightened when they removed their guard

Out of Caprona by treaty—as they withdrew
Passing among so many enemies.
I kept as close by my guide as I could go,

I' m'accostai con tutta la persona
 lungo 'l mio duca, e non torceva li occhi
 da la sembianza lor ch'era non buona.
 100 Ei chinavan li raffi e «Vuo' che 'l tocchi»,
 diceva l'un con l'altro, «in sul groppone?».
 E rispondien: «Sì, fa che gliel' accocchi».
 Ma quel demonio che tenea sermone
 col duca mio, si volse tutto presto
 e disse: «Posa, posa, Scarmiglione!».
 Poi disse a noi: «Più oltre andar per questo
 iscoglio non si può, però che giace
 tutto spezzato al fondo l'arco sesto.
 E se l'andare avante pur vi piace,
 110 andatevene su per questa grotta;
 presso è un altro scoglio che via face.
 Ier, più oltre cinqu' ore che quest' otta,
 mille dugento con sessanta sei
 anni compié che qui la via fu rotta.
 Io mando verso là di questi miei
 a riguardar s'alcun se ne sciorina;
 gite con lor, che non saranno rei».
 «Tra'ti avante, Alichino, e Calcabrina»,
 cominciò elli a dire, «e tu, Cagnazzo;
 120 e Barbariccia guidi la decina.
 Libicocco vegn' oltre e Draghignazzo,
 Ciriatto sannuto e Graffiacane
 e Farfarello e Rubicante pazzo.
 Cercate 'ntorno le boglienti pane;
 costor sian salvì infino a l'altro scheggio
 che tutto intero va sovra le tane».
 «Omè, maestro, che è quel ch'i' veggio?»
 diss' io, «deh, senza scorta andianci soli,
 se tu sa' ir; ch'i' per me non la cheggio.

And all the while I did not take my eyes
Away from their expressions . . . which were not good!
They lowered their hooks, but I heard one give voice:

100 "Should I just touch him on the rump?" Replied
The others, "Yes—go on and give him a cut."
But the demon who was talking with my guide

Turned around instantly on hearing that,
Saying, "Hold—hold, Scarmiglione!" To us
He said, "You can't go farther by this route,

Because along this ridge the sixth arch lies
All shattered at the bottom. But if you still
Wish to go forward, a ridge not far from this

Does have a place where you can cross at will.
110 It was yesterday, five hours later than now,
That the twelve hundred and sixty-sixth year fell

Since the road here was ruined. I'm sending a crew
Out of my company in that direction
To see if sinners are taking the air. You go

With them, for they'll not harm you in any fashion.
Come, Alichino and Calcabrina," he cried,
"And you, Cagnazzo; and to be the captain

Of all ten, Barbariccia. And in the squad,
Take Libicocco and Draghignazzo too,
120 And Ciriatto with his tusky head,

And also Graffiacane and Farfarello,
And crazy Rubicante. Search all around
The pools of boiling tar. And see these two

Get safely over to where the dens are spanned
By the next ridge, whose arc is undestroyed."
"O me! O master, what do I see," I groaned;

"We need no escort if you know the road—
And as for me, I want none. If you are cautious,
As is your custom, then how can you avoid

130 *Se tu se' sì accorto come suoli,
non vedi tu ch'e' digrignan li denti
e con le ciglia ne minaccian duoli?». Ed elli a me: «Non vo' che tu paventi;
lasciali digrignar pur a lor senno,
ch'e' fanno ciò per li lessi dolenti». Per l'argine sinistro volta dienno;
ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta
coi denti, verso lor duca, per cenno;
ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta.*

130 Seeing them grind their teeth and with ferocious
Brows threaten to do us harm?" And he returned,
"I tell you, have no fear: it is the wretches

Who boil here that they menace—so let them grind
As fiercely as they like, and scowl their worst."
And then the company of devils turned,

Wheeling along the left-hand bank. But first
Each signaled their leader with the same grimace:
Baring their teeth, through which the tongue was pressed;

And the leader made a trumpet of his ass.

- Io vidi già cavalier muover campo,
 e cominciare stormo e far lor mostra,
 e talvolta partir per loro scampo;
 corridor vidi per la terra vostra,
 o Aretini, e vidi gir gualdane,
 fedir torneamenti e correr giostra;
 quando con trombe, e quando con campane,
 con tamburi e con cenni di castella,
 e con cose nostrali e con istrane;
 10 né già con sì diversa cennamella
 cavalier vidi muover né pedoni,
 né nave a segno di terra o di stella.
 Noi andavam con li diece demoni.
 Ahi fiera compagnia! ma ne la chiesa
 coi santi, e in taverna coi ghiottoni.
 Pur a la pegola era la mia 'ntesa,
 per veder de la bolgia ogne contegno
 e de la gente ch'entro v'era incesa.
 Come i dalfini, quando fanno segno
 20 a' marinar con l'arco de la schiena
 che s'argomentin di campar lor legno,
 talor così, ad alleggiar la pena,
 mostrav' alcun de' peccatori 'l dosso
 e nascondea in men che non balena.
 E come a l'orlo de l'acqua d'un fosso
 stanno i ranocchi pur col muso fuori,
 sì che celano i piedi e l'altro grosso,
 sì stavan d'ogne parte i peccatori;
 ma come s'appressava Barbariccia,
 30 così si ritraén sotto i bollori.
 I' vidi, e anco il cor me n'accapriccia,
 uno aspettar così, com' elli 'ncontra
 ch'una rana rimane e l'altra spiccia;

CANTO XXII

I have seen horsemen moving camp before,
And when they muster, and when an assault begins,
And beating a retreat when they retire;

I have seen coursers, too, O Aretines,
Over your lands, and raiders setting out,
And openings of jousts and tourneys—with signs

By bell and trumpet and drum, and signals set
On castles by native and foreign signalry:
But I never saw so strange a flageolet

10 Send foot or horsemen forth, nor ship at sea
Guided by land or star! We journeyed now
With the ten demons. Ah, savage company—

But as the saying has it, one must go
With boozers in the tavern and saints in church.
Intent upon the pitch, I tried to know

All that I could of the nature of this pouch
And those who burn in it. Like dolphins who warn
Sailors to save their vessels, when they arch

20 Their backs above the water, so we could discern
From time to time a sinner show his back
To alleviate his pain, and then return

To hiding quicker than a lightning stroke.
And as at water's edge or in a ditch
Frogs lie, concealing their feet and all their bulk

With snouts above the surface: at the approach
Of Barbariccia, sinners who lay just so,
Concealing themselves on every side, would twitch

And pull back under the boiling. I saw—and now
My heart still shudders as I tell it—one stay,
50 Just as it happens that while one jumps below

e Graffiacan, che li era più di contra,
 li arruncigliò le 'mpegolate chiome
 e trassel sù, che mi parve una lontra.
 I' sapea già di tutti quanti 'l nome,
 sì li notai quando fuorono eletti,
 e poi ch'e' si chiamaro, attesi come.
 40 «O Rubicante, fa che tu li metti
 li unghioni a dosso, sì che tu lo scuoi!»,
 gridavan tutti insieme i maladetti.
 E io: «Maestro mio, fa, se tu puoi,
 che tu sappi chi è lo sciagurato
 venuto a man de li avversari suoi».

Lo duca mio li s'accostò allato;
 domandollo ond' ei fosse, e quei rispuose:
 «I' fui del regno di Navarra nato.
 Mia madre a servo d'un signor mi puose,
 50 che m'avea generato d'un ribaldo,
 distruggitor di sé e di sue cose.
 Poi fui famiglia del buon re Tebaldo;
 quivi mi misi a far baratteria,
 di ch'io rendo ragione in questo caldo».

E Ciriatto, a cui di bocca uscìa
 d'ogne parte una sanna come a porco,
 li fé sentir come l'una sdruscia.
 Tra male gatte era venuto 'l sorco;
 ma Barbariccia il chiuse con le braccia
 60 e disse: «State in là, mentr' io lo 'nforco».

E al maestro mio volse la faccia:
 «Domanda», disse, «ancor, se più disii
 saper da lui, prima ch'altri 'l disfaccia».

Lo duca dunque: «Or di: de li altri rii
 conosci tu alcun che sia latino
 sotto la pece?». E quelli: «I' mi partii,

Another frog might linger where they lay:
And Graffiacane, who was nearest, hooked
Him by his pitch-thick hair, so it looked to me

As if he had caught an otter. (I could connect
Each of them with his name, for I had noted
Carefully who they were when they were picked,

And also what they called each other.) They shouted,
“O Rubicante, grip him between your claws
And flay him.” “Master—this wretch who’s so ill-fated

40 And fallen into the hands of enemies:
I pray you, find out who he is,” I said.
Going to his side at once, he asked what place

He came from. “I was born,” replied the shade,
“In the kingdom of Navarre. My mother sent
Me to become the servant of a lord,

For she had borne me to a rascal bent
On destroying both himself and all he had.
Being admitted to the establishment

Of good King Thibaut’s household, I employed
50 Myself at barratry—which is the path
I pay for in this boiling.” So he said;

Then Ciriatto, the demon from whose mouth
Two boar-like tusks protruded, made him feel
How one of them could rip. The mouse in truth

Had come among some vicious cats; and still
Barbariccia locked him in a tight embrace,
Saying, “Stand back, while I enfork him well,”

But to my master: “Ask him what you please—
If there is more you’d like to learn from him
60 Before he’s butchered by another of us.”

So my guide asked, “Among the sinners who swim
Under the pitch, are any others you know
Italian?” He said, “I parted with one who came

- poco è, da un che fu di là vicino.
Così foss' io ancor con lui coperto,
ch' i' non temerei unghia né uncino!». 70
- E Libicocco «Troppo avem sofferto»,
disse; e preseli 'l braccio col runciglio,
sì che, stracciando, ne portò un lacerto.
Draghignazzo anco i volle dar di piglio
giuso a le gambe; onde 'l decurio loro
si volse intorno intorno con mal piglio.
Quand' elli un poco rappaciati fuoro,
a lui, ch' ancor mirava sua ferita,
domandò 'l duca mio senza dimoro:
«Chi fu colui da cui mala partita
80 di' che facesti per venire a proda?».
Ed ei rispuose: «Fu frate Gomita,
quel di Gallura, vassel d'ogne froda,
ch' ebbe i nemici di suo donno in mano,
e fé sì lor, che ciascun se ne loda.
Danar si tolse e lasciollì di piano,
sì com' e' dice; e ne li altri uffici anche
barattier fu non picciol, ma sovrano.
Usa con esso donno Michel Zanche
90 di Logodoro; e a dir di Sardigna
le lingue lor non si sentono stanche.
Omè, vedete l'altro che digrigna;
i' direi anche, ma i' temo ch' ello
non s' apparecchi a grattarmi la tigna».
E 'l gran proposto, vòlto a Farfarello
che stralunava li occhi per fedire,
disse: «Fatti 'n costà, malvagio uccello!».
«Se voi volete vedere o udire»,
ricominciò lo spaurato appresso,
«Toschi o Lombardi, io ne farò venire;
100 ma stieno i Malebranche un poco in cesso,
sì ch' ei non teman de le lor vendette;
e io, seggendo in questo loco stesso,

From there, just now. Would I were still below
Hidden with him, for then I'd need not dread
Their hooks and talons." Then cried Libicocco,

"We have endured too much!" With that he clawed
His grapple into the other's arm, and tearing
Ripped out a muscle. Draghignazzo also made

70 As if he meant to give his legs a goring,
At which their captain wheeled against them all.
When they were somewhat quiet, without deferring

His questions my leader asked the sinner, who still
Was staring at his wound: "Who was it you said
You parted from when you did yourself such ill

By coming ashore?" "Fra Gomita," he replied,
"He of Gallura, vessel of every deceit,
Who kept the enemies that his master had

80 So cunningly in hand, they praised him for it.
He took their cash and sent them on their way
Smoothly, as he recounts. And he was great

In other enterprises, equally:
No petty barrator but a lordly one.
Don Michel Zanche of Logodoro and he

Keep company together; when they go on
About Sardinia, their tongues don't tire.
But O me—look at how that other demon

Is grinding his teeth! Though I would tell you more
I fear he's getting ready to scratch my itch."
90 To Farfarello, whose eyes rolled eager for gore,

Their marshal turned and shouted his reproach:
"Get back, vile bird!" The sinner: "If you would hear
Tuscans or Lombards, there are some I can fetch—

But let the Malebranche stand back there
So those who come will not fear their revenge,
And I will make some seven souls appear

per un ch'io son, ne farò venir sette
 quand' io suffolerò, com' è nostro uso
 di fare allor che fori alcun si mette».

Cagnazzo a cotal motto levò 'l muso,
 crollando 'l capo, e disse: «Odi malizia
 ch'elli ha pensata per gittarsi giuso!».

Ond' ei, ch'avea lacciuoli a gran divizia,
 110 rispuose: «Malizioso son io troppo.
 quand' io procuro a' mia maggior trestizia».

Alichin non si tenne e, di rintoppo
 a li altri, disse a lui: «Se tu ti cali,
 io non ti verrò dietro di gualoppo,
 ma batterò sovra la pece l'ali.
 Lascisi 'l collo, e sia la ripa scudo,
 a veder se tu sol più di noi vali».

O tu che leggi, udirai nuovo ludo:
 ciascun da l'altra costa li occhi volse,
 120 quel prima, ch'a ciò fare era più crudo.

Lo Navarrese ben suo tempo colse;
 fermò le piante a terra, e in un punto
 saltò e dal proposto lor si sciolse.

Di che ciascun di colpa fu compunto,
 ma quei più che cagion fu del difetto;
 però si mosse e gridò: «Tu se' giunto!».

Ma poco i valse: ché l'ali al sospetto
 non potero avanzar; quelli andò sotto,
 e quei drizzò volando suso il petto:
 130 non altrimenti l'anitra di botto,
 quando 'l falcon s'appressa, giù s'attuffa,
 ed ei ritorna sù crucciato e rotto.

For the lone one that I am—and I won't change
My place from where I sit, but summon them
By whistling, as we do when we can emerge."

100 Cagnazzo raised his muzzle at this claim;
Shaking his head from side to side, he said,
"Just listen to this cunning trick—his aim

Is to jump back below." And he, who had
A great supply of wiles at his command,
Replied, "It's true that I am cunning indeed

At contriving greater sorrows for the band
I dwell with." Then Alichino held himself in
No longer, and opposed the others: "My friend,"

110 He said, "if you dare plunge back in again,
I'll not come merely galloping after you
But beating my wings above the pitch. The screen

Formed by the bank will hide us when we go
Down from this ridge: we'll see if you, alone,
Are a match for all of us." O reader, hear now

Of a new sport: led by the very one
Who first opposed it, all now turned their eyes
To the other shore. Timing exactly when,

120 Feet firm against the ground, the Navarrese
Suddenly leaped and instantly broke free
Out of their custody. Each demon, at this,

Felt stung by his misdoing—especially he
Who caused the blunder. So crying out, "You're caught!"
He flew away in pursuit, but futilely:

Wings could not gain on terror; down out of sight
The sinner dove, and the demon swooped back up,
Raising his breast—no different in his flight

Than when the wild duck makes a sudden escape
By diving just as the falcon plummets close,
Then veers back up, vexed at his thwarted grip.

Irato Calcabrina de la buffa,
volando dietro li tenne, invaghito
che quei campasse per aver la zuffa;
e come 'l barattier fu disparito,
così volse li artigli al suo compagno,
e fu con lui sopra 'l fosso ghermito.
Ma l'altro fu bene sparvier grifagno
140 *ad artigliar ben lui, e amendue*
cadder nel mezzo del bogliente stagno.
Lo caldo sghermitor sùbito fue;
ma però di levarsi era neente,
sì avieno inviscate l'ali sue.
Barbariccia, con li altri suoi dolente,
quattro ne fé volar da l'altra costa
con tutt' i raffi, e assai prestamente
di qua, di là discesero a la posta;
150 *porser li uncini verso li 'mpaniati,*
ch'eran già cotti dentro da la crosta.
E noi lasciammo lor così 'mpacciati.

130 Then Calcabrina, who was furious
The trick had worked, went flying after the pair,
Eager to see the sinner evade the chase

So there could be a fight. When the barrator
Had disappeared, the demon turned his claws
Upon his comrade and grappled him in midair

Above the fosse. But his opponent was
A full-grown hawk equipped with claws to respond
Truly and well; and as they fought, the brace

Fell into the middle of the boiling pond.
140 The heat unclenched them at once; but though released
They could not rise, because their wings were gummed

And clotted. Barbariccia, like the rest
Lamenting, hastily dispatched a squad
Of four who flew across to the bank we faced,

Each with a fork; hurrying from either side
They descended to their posts with hooks extended
To the mired pair, already baked inside

Their crusts; and we two left them thus confounded.

- Taciti, soli, senza compagnia
 n'andavam l'un dinanzi e l'altro dopo,
 come frati minor vanno per via.
 Vòlt' era in su la favola d'Isopo
 lo mio pensier per la presente rissa,
 dov' el parlò de la rana e del topo;
 ché più non si pareggia 'mo' e 'issa'
 che l'un con l'altro fa, se ben s'accoppia
 principio e fine con la mente fissa.
- 10 E come l'un pensier de l'altro scoppia,
 così nacque di quello un altro poi,
 che la prima paura mi fé doppia.
 Io pensava così: 'Questi per noi
 sono scherniti con danno e con beffa
 sì fatta, ch'assai credo che lor nòì.
 Se l'ira sovra 'l mal voler s'aggueffa,
 ei ne verranno dietro più crudeli
 che 'l cane a quella lievre ch'elli acceffa'.
 Già mi sentia tutti arricciar li peli
- 20 de la paura e stava in dietro intento,
 quand' io dissi: «Maestro, se non celi
 te e me tostamente, i' ho pavento
 d'i Malebranche. Noi li avem già dietro;
 io li 'magino sì, che già li sento».
 E quei: «S'i' fossi di piombato vetro,
 l'immagine di fuor tua non trarrei
 più tosto a me, che quella dentro 'mpetro.
 Pur mo venieno i tuo' pensier tra ' miei,
 con simile atto e con simile faccia,
- 30 sì che d'intrambi un sol consiglio fei.
 S'elli è che sì la destra costa giaccia,
 che noi possiam ne l'altra bolgia scendere,
 noi fuggirem l'imaginata caccia».

CANTO XXIII

Silent, alone, sans escort, with one behind
 And one before, as Friars Minor use,
 We journeyed. The present fracas turned my mind

To Aesop's fable of the frog and mouse:
Now and *this moment* are not more similar
 Than did the tale resemble the newer case,

If one is conscientious to compare
 Their ends and their beginnings. Then, as one thought
 Springs from the one before it, this now bore

10 Another which redoubled my terror: that—
 Having been fooled because of us, with wounds
 And mockery to make them the more irate,

With anger added to their malice—the fiends,
 More fiercely than a dog attacks a hare,
 Would soon come after us. I felt the ends

Of my hair bristling already from the fear.
 Intent on what was behind us on the road,
 “Master,” I said, “unless you can obscure

Both you and me from sight, and soon, I dread
 20 The Malebranche, already after us—
 And I imagine them so clearly, indeed

I hear them now.” “Were I of lead-backed glass,
 I would not take your outward countenance in
 Quicker than I do your inward one in this,”

He said; “This moment, your thoughts entered mine—
 In aspect and in action so alike
 I have made both their counsels into one:

If the right bank is sloped so as to make
 A way to reach the next fosse, then we can
 30 Escape the chase we both imagine.” He spoke

Già non compié di tal consiglio rendere,
 ch'io li vidi venir con l'ali tese
 non molto lungi, per volerne prendere.
 Lo duca mio di subito mi prese,
 come la madre ch'al romore è desta
 e vede presso a sé le fiamme accese,
 40 che prende il figlio e fugge e non s'arresta,
 avendo più di lui che di sé cura,
 tanto che solo una camiscia vesta;
 e giù dal collo de la ripa dura
 supin si diede a la pendente roccia,
 che l'un de' lati a l'altra bolgia tura.
 Non corse mai sì tosto acqua per doccia
 a volger ruota di molin terragno,
 quand' ella più verso le pale approccia,
 come 'l maestro mio per quel vivagno,
 50 portandosene me sovra 'l suo petto,
 come suo figlio, non come compagno.
 A pena fuoro i piè suoi giunti al letto
 del fondo giù, ch'e' furon in sul colle
 sovresso noi; ma non li era sospetto:
 ché l'alta provedenza che lor volle
 porre ministri de la fossa quinta,
 poder di partirs' indi a tutti tolle.
 Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta
 che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,
 60 piangendo e nel sembiante stanca e vinta.
 Elli avean cappe con cappucci bassi
 dinanzi a li occhi, fatte de la taglia
 che in Clugnè per li monaci fassi.
 Di fuor dorate son, sì ch'elli abbaglia;
 ma dentro tutte piombo, e gravi tanto,
 che Federigo le mettea di paglia.

With barely time to tell me of his plan
Before I saw them coming—wings spread wide,
Eager to seize us, not far and closing in.

My leader took me up at once, and did
As would a mother awakened by a noise
Who sees the flames around her, and takes her child,

Concerned for him more than herself, and flies
Not staying even to put on a shift:
Supine he gave himself to the rocky place

40 Where the hard bank slopes downward to the cleft,
Forming one side of the adjacent pouch.
No water coursing a sluice was ever as swift

To turn a landmill's wheel on its approach
Toward the vanes, as my master when he passed
On down that bank that slanted to the ditch,

Hurtling along with me upon his breast
Not like his mere companion, but like his child.
Just as his feet hit bottom, on the crest

Above us they appeared—but now they held
50 Nothing to fear, for that high Providence
That made them keepers of the fifth ditch willed

That they should have no power to leave its bounds.
Down at the bottom, we discovered a set
Of painted people, who slowly trod their rounds

Weeping, with looks of weariness and defeat.
Their cloaks, cowls covering the eyes and face,
Resembled those of Cluny's monks in cut.

These cloaks were gilded on the side that shows
So that the eye was dazzled—but all of lead
60 On the inside: so heavy, compared to these

The capes inflicted by Frederick were made
Of woven straw. O heavy mantle to bear
Through eternity! As ever, we pursued

Oh in eterno faticoso manto!
 Noi ci volgemmo ancor pur a man manca
 con loro insieme, intenti al tristo pianto;
 70 ma per lo peso quella gente stanca
 venìa sì pian, che noi eravam nuovi
 di compagnia ad ogne mover d'anca.
 Per ch'io al duca mio: «Fa che tu trovi
 alcun ch'al fatto o al nome si conosca,
 e li occhi, sì andando, intorno movi».
 E un che 'ntese la parola tosca,
 di retro a noi gridò: «Tenete i piedi,
 voi che correte sì per l'aura fosca!
 Forse ch'avrai da me quel che tu chiedi».
 80 Onde 'l duca si volse e disse: «Aspetta,
 e poi secondo il suo passo procedi».
 Ristetti, e vidi due mostrar gran fretta
 de l'animo, col viso, d'esser meco;
 ma tardavali 'l carico e la via stretta.
 Quando fuor giunti, assai con l'occhio bieco
 mi rimiraron senza far parola;
 poi si volsero in sé, e dicean seco:
 «Costui par vivo a l'atto de la gola;
 e s'e' son morti, per qual privilegio
 90 vanno scoperti de la grave stola?».
 Poi disser me: «O Tosco, ch'al collegio
 de l'ipocriti tristi se' venuto,
 dir chi tu se' non avere in dispregio».
 E io a loro: «I' fui nato e cresciuto
 sovra 'l bel fiume d'Arno a la gran villa,
 e son col corpo ch'i' ho sempre avuto.
 Ma voi chi siete, a cui tanto distilla
 quant' i' veggio dolor giù per le guance?
 e che pena è in voi che sì sfavilla?»

Our course by turning to the left, and bore
Along with them, intent on how they moaned.
But they came slowly, burdened as they were—

So that with every step we took we found
Our company was new. I asked my guide,
“Pray find some person here, by looking round

70 As we walk on, whom I know by name or deed.”
And one among them caught the Tuscan speech:
“Stay your quick steps through this dark air,” he cried

As we came past him. “Perhaps what you beseech
You can obtain from me.” At which my guide
Turned back to me, with: “Wait: let him approach

And then proceed at his pace.” So I stayed,
And saw two coming who by their faces appeared
In a great haste of mind to reach my side

80 Although their burden held them in retard,
As did the crowding. When they came up together
They looked at me askance without a word

For some good while. Then, turning toward each other
They said, “This one appears to be alive,
Judging by how his throat moves; but if, rather,

These two are dead, what privilege can they have,
To go unencumbered by the heavy stole?”
And then to me, “O Tuscan, you who arrive

At the sad hypocrites’ assembly: pray tell—
Not scorning to so address us—who you are.”
90 “At the great town,” I said, “on the beautiful

Waters of Arno, I was born, and there
I grew up, and the body I wear now
I have always had—but who are you, who bear

Upon your cheeks these distillates of woe?
What is your punishment that glitters so bright?”
“The orange cloaks are lead,” said one of the two,

100 *E l'un rispuose a me: «Le cappe rance
 son di piombo sì grosse, che li pesi
 fan così cigolar le lor bilance.
 Frati godenti fummo, e bolognesi;
 io Catalano e questi Loderingo
 nomati, e da tua terra insieme presi
 come suole esser tolto un uom solingo,
 per conservar sua pace; e fummo tali,
 ch'ancor si pare intorno dal Gardingo».*
Io cominciai: «O frati, i vostri mali . . .»;
 110 *ma più non dissi, ch'a l'occhio mi corse
 un, crucifisso in terra con tre pali.*
*Quando mi vide, tutto si distorse,
 soffiando ne la barba con sospiri;
 e 'l frate Catalan, ch'a ciò s'accorse,
 mi disse: «Quel confitto che tu miri,
 consigliò i Farisei che convenia
 porre un uom per lo popolo a' martiri.*
*Attraversato è, nudo, ne la via,
 come tu vedi, ed è mestier ch'el senta
 qualunque passa, come pesa, pria.*
 120 *E a tal modo il socero si stenta
 in questa fossa, e li altri dal concilio
 che fu per li Giudei mala sementa».*
*Allor vid' io maravigliar Virgilio
 sovra colui ch'era disteso in croce
 tanto vilmente ne l'eterno essilio.*
Poscia drizzò al frate cotal voce:
*«Non vi dispiaccia, se vi lece, dirci
 s'a la man destra giace alcuna foce*
 130 *onde noi amendue possiamo uscirci,
 senza costringer de li angeli neri
 che vegnan d'esto fondo a dipartirci».*

“So thick, that we their scales creak at the weight.
We both were Jovial Friars, and Bolognese:
As for names, I was Catalano, and that

100 Was Loderingo, and we were your city’s choice—
The way they usually choose one man—
To keep the peace: and what we were still shows

In the Gardingo district.” Then I began:
“O Friars, your evil—” but that was all I said,
For as I spoke my eye was caught by one

Upon the ground, where he was crucified
By three stakes. When he saw me there he squirmed
All over, and puffing in his beard, he sighed;

Fra Catalano, observing this, explained:
110 “The one impaled there you are looking at
Is he who counseled the Pharisees to bend

The expedient way, by letting one man be put
To torture for the people. You see him stretch
Naked across the path to feel the weight

Of everyone who passes; and in this ditch,
Trussed the same way, are racked his father-in-law
And others of that council which was such

A seed of evil for the Jews.” I saw
Virgil, who had been marveling over the man
120 Doomed to be stretched out vilely crosswise so

In the eternal exile. He spoke words then,
Directed to the friar: “Be it allowed,
And if it pleases you, could you explain

What passage there may be on the right-hand side
By which we two can journey away from here,
Without requiring those black angels’ aid

To come and take us from this valley floor?”
And he replied, “Nearer than you may hope
Is a rock ridge that starts from the circular

*Rispuose adunque: «Più che tu non speri
s'appressa un sasso che da la gran cerchia
si move e varca tutt' i vallon feri,
salvo che 'n questo è rotto e nol coperchia;
montar potreste su per la ruina,
che giace in costa e nel fondo soperchia».*
*Lo duca stette un poco a testa china;
poi disse: «Mal contava la bisogna
colui che i peccator di qua uncina».*
*E 'l frate: «Io udi' già dire a Bologna
del diavol vizi assai, tra ' quali udi'
ch'elli è bugiardo e padre di menzogna».*
*Appresso il duca a gran passi sen gi,
turbato un poco d'ira nel sembante;
ond' io da li 'ncarcati mi parti'
dietro a le poste de le care piante.*

130 Great wall surrounding us, and spans the top
Of all the savage valleys except for this—
Where it is broken and fallen down the slope

Rather than arching over: and at that place,
You can mount up by climbing the debris
Of rock along the slopes of the crevasse

And piled up at the bottom.” Silently
My leader stood a moment bowing his head,
Then, “He who hooks the sinners, back that way,

Supplied a bad account of this,” he said.
140 The friar: “In Bologna the saying goes,
As I have heard, that the Devil is endowed

With many vices—among them, that he lies
And is the father of lies, I have also heard.”
And then my guide moved onward, setting the pace

With mighty strides, and with his features stirred
To some disturbance by his anger yet;
And leaving those burdened souls I too went forward,

Following in the tracks of his dear feet.

- In quella parte del giovanetto anno
 che 'l sole i crin sotto l'Aquario temprà
 e già le notti al mezzo dì sen vanno,
 quando la brina in su la terra assempra
 l'immagine di sua sorella bianca,
 ma poco dura a la sua penna temprà,
 lo villanello a cui la roba manca,
 si leva, e guarda, e vede la campagna
 biancheggiar tutta; ond' ei si batte l'anca,*
- 10 *ritorna in casa, e qua e là si lagna,
 come 'l tapin che non sa che si faccia;
 poi riede, e la speranza ringavagna,
 veggendo 'l mondo aver cangiata faccia
 in poco d'ora, e prende suo vincastro
 e fuor le pecorelle a pascere caccia.*
- Così mi fece sbigottir lo mastro
 quand' io li vidi sì turbar la fronte,
 e così tosto al mal giunse lo 'mpiastrò;
 ché, come noi venimmo al guasto ponte,*
- 20 *lo duca a me sì volse con quel piglio
 dolce ch'io vidi prima a piè del monte.*
- Le braccia aperse, dopo alcun consiglio
 eletto seco riguardando prima
 ben la ruina, e diedemi di piglio.*
- E come quei ch'adopera ed estima,
 che sempre par che 'nnanzi si proveggia,
 così, levando me sù ver' la cima
 d'un ronchione, avvisava un'altra scheggia
 dicendo: «Sovra quella poi t'aggrappa;*
- 30 *ma tenta pria s'è tal ch'ella ti reggia».*

CANTO XXIV

In that part of the young year when the sun
Goes under Aquarius to rinse his beams,
And the long nights already begin to wane

Toward half the day, and when the hoarfrost mimes
The image of her white sister upon the ground—
But only a while, because her pen, it seems,

Is not sharp long—a peasant who has found
That he is running short of fodder might rise
And go outside and see the fields have turned

10 To white, and slap his thigh, and back in the house
Pace grumbling here and there like some poor wretch
Who can't see what to do; and then he goes

Back out, and finds hope back within his reach,
Seeing in how little time the world outside
Has changed its face, and takes his crook to fetch

His sheep to pasture. I felt this way, dismayed
By my master's stormy brow; and quickly as this,
The hurt had found its plaster. For when we stood

20 Before the ruined bridge, my leader's face
Turned to me with a sweet expression, the same
As I had first beheld at the mountain's base.

He opened his arms, after he took some time
To consult himself and study the ruin well,
And taking hold of me began the climb.

As one who works and reckons all the while
Seems always to have provided in advance,
So, lifting me up one great boulder's wall,

30 He kept his eye on another eminence,
Saying, "Next, grapple that one—but make sure
That it will bear you, first." That path of stones

Non era via da vestito di cappa,
 ché noi a pena, ei lieve e io sospinto,
 potavam sù montar di chiappa in chiappa.
 E se non fosse che da quel precinto
 più che da l'altro era la costa corta,
 non so di lui, ma io sarei ben vinto.
 Ma perché Malebolge inver' la porta
 del bassissimo pozzo tutta pende,
 lo sito di ciascuna valle porta
 40 che l'una costa surge e l'altra scende;
 noi pur venimmo al fine in su la punta
 onde l'ultima pietra si scoscende.
 La lena m'era del polmon sì munta
 quand' io fui sù, ch'i' non potea più oltre,
 anzi m'assisi ne la prima giunta.
 «Omai convien che tu così ti spoltre»,
 disse 'l maestro; «ché, seggendo in piuma,
 in fama non si vien, né sotto coltre;
 senza la qual ch'ì sua vita consuma,
 50 cotal vestigio in terra di sé lascia,
 qual fummo in aere e in acqua la schiuma.
 E però leva sù; vinci l'ambascia
 con l'animo che vince ogne battaglia,
 se col suo grave corpo non s'accascia.
 Più lunga scala convien che si saglia;
 non basta da costoro esser partito.
 Se tu mi 'ntendi, or fa sì che ti vaglia».
 Leva'mi allor, mostrandomi fornito
 meglio di lena ch'i' non mi sentia,
 60 e dissi: «Va, ch'i' son forte e ardito».

Would not provide a road for those who wore
Lead mantles, for we—he weightless, I helped up—
Could barely make our way from spur to spur.

Had it not been that on that bank the slope
Was shorter than on the other, I do not know
How he'd have fared, but I'd have had to stop

And would have been defeated; but it was true
In each valley that the contour of the land
Made one side higher and the other low,

40 Because of the way all Malebolge inclined
Downward toward the mouth of the lowest pit.
At length we reached the place at which we found

The last stone broken off, and there I sat
As soon as I was up—so out of breath
Were my spent lungs I felt that I could get

No farther than I was. “To cast off sloth
Now well behooves you,” said my master then:
“For resting upon soft down, or underneath

50 The blanket's cloth, is not how fame is won—
Without which, one spends life to leave behind
As vestige of himself on earth the sign

Smoke leaves on air, or foam on water. So stand
And overcome your panting—with the soul,
Which wins all battles if it does not despond

Under its heavy body's weight. And still
A longer ladder remains for us to climb;
To leave these shades behind does not fulfill

60 All that's required. If you understand me, come:
Act now, to profit yourself.” I got to my feet,
Showing more breath than I felt, and said to him,

“Go on, for I am strong and resolute.”
And so, ascending the ridge, we took our way:
It was quite rugged, narrow and difficult,

Su per lo scoglio prendemmo la via,
 ch'era ronchioso, stretto e malagevole,
 ed erto più assai che quel di pria.
 Parlando andava per non parer fievole;
 onde una voce uscì de l'altro fosso,
 a parole formar disconvenevole.
 Non so che disse, ancor che sovra 'l dosso
 fossi de l'arco già che varca quivi;
 ma chi parlava ad ire pareva mosso.
 70 Io era vòlto in giù, ma li occhi vivi
 non poteano ire al fondo per lo scuro;
 per ch'io: «Maestro, fa che tu arrivi
 da l'altro cinghio e dismantiam lo muro;
 ché, com' i' odo quinci e non intendo,
 così giù veggio e neente affiguro».
 «Altra risposta», disse, «non ti rendo
 se non lo far; ché la dimanda onesta
 si de' seguir con l'opera tacendo».
 Noi discendemmo il ponte da la testa
 80 dove s'aggiugne con l'ottava ripa,
 e poi mi fu la bolgia manifesta:
 e vidivi entro terribile stipa
 di serpenti, e di sì diversa mena
 che la memoria il sangue ancor mi scipa.
 Più non si vanti Libia con sua rena;
 ché se chelidri, iaculi e faree
 produce, e cencri con anfisibena,
 né tante pestilenzie né sì ree
 mostrò già mai con tutta l'Etìopia
 90 né con ciò che di sopra al Mar Rosso èe.
 Tra questa cruda e tristissima copia
 corrëan genti nude e spaventate,
 senza sperar pertugio o elitropia:
 con serpi le man dietro avean legate;
 quelle ficcavan per le ren la coda
 e 'l capo, ed eran dinanzi aggroppate.

Far steeper than the last. To seem to be
Not too fatigued, I was talking while I trudged,
When a voice arose—one ill equipped to say

Actual words—from the new fosse we had reached.
I don't know what it said, though I was now
At the high point of the bridge which overarched

70 The ditch there, but whoever spoke from below
Seemed to be moving. I turned quick eyes to peer
Down into the dark, but the bottom didn't show—

Wherefore I said, "Master, pray lead from here
To the next belt, and let us descend the wall:
Just as I cannot decipher the things I hear,

So too I look but make out nothing at all
From where we are." "I'll give no other response,"
He said, "but do it, for fitting petitions call

80 For deeds, not words." Where the bridge's end adjoins
The eighth bank, we descended, and then that pouch
Showed itself to me: I saw in its confines

Serpents—a frightening swarm, of weird kinds such
As to remember now still chills my blood.
Let Libya boast no more of her sands so rich

In reptiles, for though they spawn the chelydrid,
Cenchres with amphisbaena, the jaculi
And phareae, she never, though one include

90 All Ethiopia and the lands that lie
On the Red Sea, has shown a pestilence
So numerous or of such malignancy.

Amid this horde, cruel, grim and dense,
People were running, naked and terrified,
Without a hope of hiding or a chance

At heliotrope for safety. Their hands were tied
Behind their backs—with snakes, that thrust between
Where the legs meet, entwining tail and head

Ed ecco a un ch'era da nostra proda,
 s'avventò un serpente che 'l trafisse
 là dove 'l collo a le spalle s'annoda.
 100 Né O sì tosto mai né I si scrisse,
 com'el s'accese e arse, e cener tutto
 convenne che cascando divenisse;
 e poi che fu a terra sì d'istrutto,
 la polver si raccolse per sé stessa
 e 'n quel medesimo ritornò di butto.
 Così per li gran savi si confessa
 che la fenice more e poi rinasce,
 quando al cinquecentesimo anno appressa;
 erba né biado in sua vita non pasce,
 110 ma sol d'incenso lagrime e d'amomo,
 e nardo e mirra son l'ultime fasce.
 E qual è quel che cade, e non sa como,
 per forza di demon ch'a terra il tira,
 o d'altra oppilazion che lega l'omo,
 quando si leva, che 'ntorno si mira
 tutto smarrito de la grande angoscia
 ch'elli ha sofferta, e guardando sospira:
 tal era 'l peccator levato poscia.
 Oh potenza di Dio, quant'è severa,
 120 che cotai colpi per vendetta croscia!
 Lo duca il domandò poi chi ello era;
 per ch'ei rispuose: «Io piovvi di Toscana,
 poco tempo è, in questa gola fiera.
 Vita bestial mi piacque e non umana,
 sì come a mul ch'i' fui; son Vanni Fucci
 bestia, e Pistoia mi fu degna tana».
 E iò al duca: «Dilli che non mucci,
 e domanda che colpa qua giù 'l pinse;
 ch'io 'l vidi omo di sangue e di crucci».
 130 E 'l peccator, che 'ntese, non s'infinse,
 ma drizzò verso me l'animo e 'l volto,
 e di trista vergogna si dipinse;

Into a knot in front. And look!—at one
Near us a serpent darted, and transfixed
Him at the point where neck and shoulders join.

100 No *o* or *i* could be made with strokes as fast
As he took fire and burned and withered away,
Sinking; and when his ashes came to rest

Ruined on the ground, the dust spontaneously
Resumed its former shape. Just so expires
The Phoenix in its flames, great sages agree,

To be born again every five hundred years;
During its life, it feeds on neither grain
Nor herb but amomum and incense's tears,

And at its end the sheet it's shrouded in
110 Is essence of nard and myrrh. As one who falls
And knows not how—if a demon pulled him down,

Or another blockage human life entails—
And when he rises stares about confused
By the great anguish that he knows he feels,

And looking, sighs; so was that sinner dazed
When he stood up again. Oh, power of God!
How severe its vengeance is, to have imposed

Showers of such blows. My leader asked the shade
To tell us who he was. "The time is brief
120 Since I rained down from Tuscany," he replied,

"Into this gullet. It was a bestial life,
Not human, that pleased me best, mule that I was.
I am Vanni Fucci, beast—and aptly enough,

Pistoia was my den." And, "Master, please
Bid him not slip away, but ask what sin
It was," I said, "that thrust him to this place,

For in his time I have known him as a man
Of blood and rage." The sinner, who had heard,
Without dissembling turned mind and face—which shone

poi disse: «Più mi duol che tu m'hai colto
 ne la miseria dove tu mi vedi,
 che quando fui de l'altra vita tolto.
 Io non posso negar quel che tu chiedi;
 in giù son messo tanto perch' io fui
 ladro a la sagrestia d'i belli arredi,
 e falsamente già fu apposto altrui.
 140 Ma perché di tal vista tu non godi,
 se mai sarai di fuor da' luoghi bui,
 apri li orecchi al mio annunzio, e odi.
 Pistoia in pria d'i Neri si dimagra;
 poi Fiorenza rinova gente e modi.
 Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra
 ch'è di torbidi nuvoli involuto;
 e con tempesta impetüosa e agra
 sovra Campo Picen fia combattuto;
 ond' ei repente spezzerà la nebbia,
 150 sì ch'ogne Bianco ne sarà feruto.
 E detto l'ho perché doler ti debbia!».

130 The color of shame—to me; then he declared,
“That you have caught me here amid this grief
Causes me suffering worse than I endured

When I was taken from the other life.
I cannot refuse your question: I must be
Thrust this far down because I was a thief

Who took adornments from the sacristy—
For which another, falsely, was condemned.
But, lest you delight too much in what you see

140 If ever you escape from this dark ground:
Open your ears to what I now pronounce,
And listen. First, Pistoia strips her land

Of Blacks, then Florence changes her citizens
And ways. From Val di Magra, Mars draws a great
Vapor, and thick clouds muffle its turbulence

Till stormy, bitter, impetuous war breaks out
On Campo Piceno—where suddenly, it breaks through
And tears the mist and strikes at every White:

And I have told it to bring grief to you.”

- Al fine de le sue parole il ladro
 le mani alzò con amendue le fiche,
 gridando: «Togli, Dio, ch'a te le squadra!».*
*Da indi in qua mi fuor le serpi amiche,
 perch' una li s'avvolse allora al collo,
 come dicesse 'Non vo' che più diche';
 e un'altra a le braccia, e rilegollo,
 ribadendo sé stessa sì dinanzi,
 che non potea con esse dare un crollo.*
- 10 *Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia, ché non stanzi
 d'incenerarti sì che più non duri,
 poi che 'n mal fare il seme tuo avanzi?
 Per tutt' i cerchi de lo 'nferno scuri
 non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo,
 non quel che cadde a Tebe giù da' muri.
 El si fuggì che non parlò più verbo;
 e io vidi un centauro pien di rabbia
 venir chiamando: «Ov' è, ov' è l'acerbo?».*
Maremma non cred' io che tante n'abbia,
- 20 *quante bisce elli avea su per la groppa
 infin ove comincia nostra labbia.
 Sovra le spalle, dietro da la coppa,
 con l'ali aperte li giacea un draco;
 e quello affuoca qualunque s'intoppa.
 Lo mio maestro disse: «Questi è Caco,
 che, sotto 'l sasso di monte Aventino,
 di sangue fece spesse volte laco.
 Non va co' suoi fratei per un cammino,
 per lo furto che frodolente fece*
- 30 *del grande armento ch'elli ebbe a vicino;*

The thief held up his hands when he was through,
 And "God," he cried, making the fig with both—
 "Take these: I aim them squarely up at you!"

The serpents were my friends from that time forth,
 For then one coiled itself about his neck
 As if to say, "That's all then, from your mouth,"

And another went around his arms to snake
 Them tight and cinch itself in front, so tied
 They couldn't budge enough to gesture. Alack,

10 Pistoia, Pistoia!—Why haven't you decreed
 Your own incineration, so that you dwell
 On earth no more, since you surpass your seed

In evildoing? In all the circles of Hell
 I saw no spirit so arrogant to God,
 Not even him who fell from the Theban wall.

Speaking no more then, Vanni Fucci fled,
 And next I saw a centaur full of rage:
 "Where is he? Where is the bitter one?" he cried

20 As he charged up. I think more snakes than lodge
 In Maremma's swamp were riding on his croup,
 Swarming along his back up to the edge

Of our human form. He bore behind his nape,
 Along the shoulders, a dragon with wings spread wide:
 If any blocked the path, it burned them up.

"This centaur's name is Cacus," my master said,
 "Who underneath the stones of Aventine
 Many a time has made a lake of blood.

He doesn't walk the same road as his clan
 Because by theft and fraud he tried to get
 30 The splendid herd that lay near him—a sin

onde cessar le sue opere bieche
 sotto la mazza d'Ercule, che forse
 gliene diè cento, e non senti le diece».

Mentre che sì parlava, ed el trascorse,
 e tre spiriti venner sotto noi,
 de' quai né io né 'l duca mio s'accorse,
 se non quando gridar: «Chi siete voi?»;
 per che nostra novella si ristette,
 e intendemmo pur ad essi poi.

40 Io non li conoscea; ma ei seguette,
 come suol seguitar per alcun caso,
 che l'un nomar un altro convenette,
 dicendo: «Cianfa dove fia rimaso?»;
 per ch'io, acciò che 'l duca stesse attento,
 mi puosi 'l dito su dal mento al naso.

Se tu se' or, lettore, a creder lento
 ciò ch'io dirò, non sarà maraviglia,
 ché io che 'l vidi, a pena il mi consento.

Com' io tenea levate in lor le ciglia,
 50 e un serpente con sei piè si lancia
 dinanzi a l'uno, e tutto a lui s'appiglia.

Co' piè di mezzo li avvinse la pancia
 e con li anterior le braccia prese;
 poi li addentò e l'una e l'altra guancia;
 li diretani a le cosce distese,
 e miseli la coda tra 'mbedue
 e dietro per le ren sù la ritese.

Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue
 ad alber sì, come l'orribil fiera
 60 per l'altrui membra avviticchiò le sue.

Poi s'appiccar, come di calda cera
 fossero stati, e mischiar lor colore,
 né l'un né l'altro già pareva quel ch'era:
 come procede innanzi da l'ardore,
 per lo papiro suso, un color bruno
 che non è nero ancora e 'l bianco more.

That ended his crooked habits: he died for it.
When Hercules's club rained onto his head
Some hundred blows, he lived to feel ten hit."

While he was saying this, the centaur sped
Beyond us, and three new spirits appeared below;
They went unnoticed by me or by my guide

Until they shouted to us, "Who are you?"
At which we ceased our talk and turned to them.
I did not know them, but as people do

40 When chance disposes, one had some cause to name
Another—"Where have we left Cianfa?" he said.
To be sure my leader heard, I signaled him

To stay alert, with a finger that I laid
From chin to nose. Reader, if you are slow
To credit what I tell you next, it should

Be little wonder, for I who saw it know
That I myself can hardly acknowledge it:
While I was staring at the sinners below

50 A serpent darted forward that had six feet,
And facing one of the three it fastened on him
All over—with the middle feet it got

A grip upon the belly, with each fore-limb
It clasped an arm; its fangs gripped both his cheeks;
It spread its hind feet out to do the same

To both his thighs, extending its tail to flex
Between them upward through to the loins behind.
No ivy growing in a tree's bark sticks

As firmly as the horrid beast entwined
Its limbs around the other. Then, as if made
60 Out of hot wax, they clung and made a bond

And mixed their colors; and neither could be construed
As what it was at first—so, as the track
Of flame moves over paper, there is a shade

Li altri due 'l riguardavano, e ciascuno
 gridava: «Omè, Agnel, come ti muti!
 Vedi che già non se' né due né uno».

70 Già eran li due capi un divenuti,
 quando n'apparver due figure miste
 in una faccia, ov' eran due perduti.
 Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste;
 le cosce con le gambe e 'l ventre e 'l casso
 divenner membra che non fuor mai viste.
 Ogne primaio aspetto ivi era casso:
 due e nessun l'immagine perversa
 pareva; e tal sen gio con lento passo.
 Come 'l ramarro sotto la gran fersa

80 dei di canicular, cangiando sepe,
 folgore par se la via attraversa,
 sì pareva, venendo verso l'epe
 de li altri due, un serpentello acceso,
 livido e nero come gran di pepe;
 e quella parte onde prima è preso
 nostro alimento, a l'un di lor trafisse;
 poi cadde giuso innanzi lui disteso.
 Lo trafitto 'l mirò, ma nulla disse;
 anzi, co' piè fermati, sbadigliava

90 pur come sonno o febbre l'assalisce.
 Elli 'l serpente e quei lui riguardava;
 l'un per la piaga e l'altro per la bocca
 fummavan forte, e 'l fummo si scontrava.
 Taccia Lucano omai là dov' e' tocca
 del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,
 e attenda a udir quel ch'or si scocca.
 Taccia di Cadmo e d'Aretusa Ovidio,
 ché se quello in serpente e quella in fonte
 converte poetando, io non lo 'nvidio;

That moves before it that is not yet black,
And the white dies away. The other two
Were looking on, and cried, "Ah me, now look

At how you change, Agnello!—already you
Are neither two nor one." Now the two heads
Had become one; we watched the two shapes grow

70 Into one face, where both were lost. The sides
Grew two arms, fused from lengths that had been four;
Thighs, legs, chest, belly merged; and in their steads

Grew members that were never seen before.
All of the former features were blotted out.
A perverse shape, with both not what they were,

Yet neither—such, its pace deliberate,
It moved away. The way a lizard can dash
Under the dog day's scourge, darting out

Between the hedges so that it seems a flash
80 Of lightning if it spurts across the road,
So did a fiery little serpent rush

Toward the bellies of the two who stayed;
Peppercorn black and livid, it struck out,
Transfixing one in the place where we are fed

When life begins—then fell before his feet,
Outstretched. The pierced one gazed at it and stood
Not speaking, only yawning as if a fit

Of sleep or fever had taken him. He eyed
The serpent, the serpent him. From this one's wound
90 And that one's mouth smoke violently flowed,

And their smoke met. Let Lucan now attend
In silence, who has told the wretched fates
Of Nasidius and Sabellus—till he has learned

What I will let fly next. And Ovid, who writes
Of Cadmus and Arethusa, let him be still—
For though he in his poet-craft transmutes

100 *ché due nature mai a fronte a fronte
 non trasmutò sì ch'amendue le forme
 a cambiar lor matera fosser pronte.
 Insieme si rispuosero a tai norme,
 che 'l serpente la coda in forza fesse,
 e 'l feruto ristrinse insieme l'orme.
 Le gambe con le cosce seco stessee
 s'appiccar sì, che 'n poco la giuntura
 non facea segno alcun che si paresse.
 Togliea la coda fessa la figura
 110 *che si perdeva là, e la sua pelle
 si facea molle, e quella di là dura.
 Io vidi intrar le braccia per l'ascelle,
 e i due piè de la fiera, ch'eran corti,
 tanto allungar quanto accorciavan quelle.
 Poscia li piè di dietro, insieme attorti,
 diventarón lo membro che l'uom cела,
 e 'l misero del suo n'avea due porti.
 Mentre che 'l fummo l'uno e l'altro vela
 di color novo, e genera 'l pel suso
 120 *per l'una parte e da l'altra il dipela,
 l'un si levò e l'altro cadde giuso,
 non torcendo però le lucerne empie,
 sotto le quai ciascun cambiava muso.
 Quel ch'era dritto, il trasse ver' le tempie,
 e di troppa matera ch'in là venne
 uscir li orecchi de le gote scempie;
 ciò che non corse in dietro e si ritenne
 di quel soverchio, fé naso a la faccia
 e le labbra ingrossò quanto convenne.
 130 *Quel che giacèa, il muso innanzi caccia,
 e li orecchi ritira per la testa
 come face le corna la lumaccia:
 e la lingua, ch'avèa unita e presta
 prima a parlar, si fende, e la forcuta
 ne l'altro si richiude; e 'l fummo resta.****

One to a serpent, and makes the other spill
Transformed into a fountain, I envy him not:
He never transformed two individual

100 Front-to-front natures so both forms as they met
Were ready to exchange their substance. The twain
Reacted mutually: the reptile split

Its tail to make a fork; the wounded one
Conjoined his feet. The legs and thighs were pressed
So tight no mark of juncture could be seen;

The split tail took the shape the other lost,
Its skin grew softer, and the other's hard.
I saw the arms draw inward to be encased

110 Inside the armpits; the animal's feet appeared
To lengthen as the other's arms grew less.
The hind paws, twisting together like a cord,

Became the member man conceals. From his,
The wretch had grown two feet. While the smoke veils
Each one with colors that are new, and grows

Hair here and strips it there, the one shape falls
And one comes upright. But neither turned aside
The unholy lights that stared above the muzzles

120 They each were changing: the one who newly stood
Drew his in toward his temples, and from the spare
Matter from that, ears issued from the head,

Behind smooth cheeks; what didn't course to an ear
But was retained became the face's nose,
And fleshed the lips to the thickness they should bear.

He that lay prone propelled his nose and face
Forward, and shrank his ears back into the head
As a snail does its horns. The tongue that was

Whole and prepared for speech was split instead—
And in the other the forked tongue formed one piece:
And the smoke ceased. The soul that had been made

*L'anima ch'era fiera divenuta,
suffolando si fugge per la valle,
e l'altro dietro a lui parlando sputa.
Poscia li volse le novelle spalle,
140 e disse a l'altro: «I' vo' che Buoso corra,
com' ho fatt' io, carpon per questo calle».
Così vid' io la settimana zavorra
mutare e trasmutare; e qui mi scusi
la novità se fior la penna abborra.
E avvegna che li occhi miei confusi
fossero alquanto e l'animo smagato,
non poter quei fuggirsi tanto chiusi,
ch'ì non scorgessi ben Puccio Sciancato;
150 ed era quel che sol, di tre compagni
che venner prima, non era mutato;
l'altr' era quel che tu, Gaville, piagni.*

130 A beast fled down the valley with a hiss;
The other, speaking now, spat after it,
Turned his new shoulders on it to address

The third, and said: "I'll have Buoso trot
On all fours down this road, as I have done!"
And so I saw that seventh deadweight transmute

And mutate—and may its strangeness excuse my pen,
If it has tangled things. And though my eyes
Were somewhat in confusion at the scene,

140 My mind somewhat bewildered, yet none of these
Could flee to hide himself so secretly
That I could not distinguish well the face

Of Puccio Sciancato, who of the three
Companions that we first took notice of,
Alone was not transformed; the other was he

Whose death, Gaville, you have good cause to grieve.

- Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
 che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
 e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!
 Tra li ladron trovai cinque cotali
 tuoi cittadini onde mi ven vergogna,
 e tu in grande orranza non ne sali.
 Ma se presso al mattin del ver si sogna,
 tu sentirai, di qua da picciol tempo,
 di quel che Prato, non ch'altri, t'agogna.
- 10 E se già fosse, non saria per tempo.
 Così foss' ei, da che pur esser dee!
 ché più mi graverà, com' più m'attempo.
 Noi ci partimmo, e su per le scalee
 che n'avean fatto i borni a scender pria,
 rimontò 'l duca mio e trasse mee;
 e proseguendo la solinga via,
 tra le schegge e tra ' rocchi de lo scoglio
 lo piè senza la man non si spedia.
- 20 Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio
 quando drizzo la mente a ciò ch'io vidi,
 e più lo 'ngegno affreno ch'ì non soglio,
 perché non corra che virtù nol guidi;
 sì che, se stella bona o miglior cosa
 m'ha dato 'l ben, ch'io stessi nol m'invidi.
 Quante 'l villan ch'al poggio si riposa,
 nel tempo che colui che 'l mondo schiara
 la faccia sua a noi tien meno ascosa,

CANTO XXVI

Rejoice, O Florence, since you are so great,
Beating your wings on land and on the sea,
That in Hell too your name is spread about!

I found among those there for their thievery
Five of your citizens, which carries shame
For me—and you gain no high honor thereby.

But if we dream the truth near morning time,
Then you will feel, before much time has gone,
What Prato and others crave for you—and come

10 Already, it would not have come too soon.
And truly, let it, since it must come to pass:
For it will all the heavier weigh me down,

The older I become. We left the place,
And on the stairway that the jutting stone
A little while before had offered us

On our descent, my guide climbed up again
And drew me up to pursue our lonely course.
Without the hand the foot could not go on,

Climbing that jagged ridge's rocks and spurs.
20 I sorrowed then, and when I turn my mind
To what I saw next, sorrow again—and force

My art to make its genius more restrained
Than is my usual bent, lest it should run
Where virtue doesn't: so that if any kind

Star or some better thing has made it mine
I won't myself negate the gift in me.
As many as the fireflies a peasant has seen

(Resting on a hill that time of year when he
Who lights the world least hides his face from us,
30 And at the hour when the fly gives way

come la mosca cede a la zanzara,
 vede lucciole giù per la vallea,
 30 forse colà dov' e' vendemmia e ara:
 di tante fiamme tutta risplendea
 l'ottava bolgia, sì com' io m'accorsi
 tosto che fui là 've 'l fondo parea.
 E qual colui che si vengìo con li orsi
 vide 'l carro d'Elia al dipartire,
 quando i cavalli al cielo erti levorsi,
 che nol potea sì con li occhi seguire,
 ch'el vedesse altro che la fiamma sola,
 sì come nuvoletta, in sù salire:
 40 tal si move ciascuna per la gola
 del fosso, ché nessuna mostra 'l furto,
 e ogne fiamma un peccatore invola.
 Io stava sovra 'l ponte a veder surto,
 sì che s'io non avessi un ronchion preso,
 caduto sarei giù sanz' esser urto.
 E 'l duca, che mi vide tanto atteso,
 disse: «Dentro dai fuochi son li spirti;
 catun si fascia di quel ch'elli è inceso».
 «Maestro mio», rispuos' io, «per udirli
 50 son io più certo; ma già m'era avviso
 che così fosse, e già voleva dirti:
 chi è 'n quel foco che vien sì diviso
 di sopra, che par surger de la pira
 dov' Eteòcle col fratel fu miso?».
 Rispuose a me: «Là dentro si martira
 Ulisse e Diomede, e così insieme
 a la vendetta vanno come a l'ira;
 e dentro da la lor fiamma si geme
 l'agguato del caval che fé la porta
 60 onde uscì de' Romani il gentil seme.

To the mosquito) all down the valley's face,
Where perhaps he gathers grapes and tills the ground:
With flames that numerous was Hell's eighth fosse

Glittering, as I saw when I attained
A place from which its floor could be made out.
And as the one avenged by bears divined

That what he saw was Elijah's chariot
Carried by rearing horses to Heaven's domain—
For with his eyes he couldn't follow it

40 Except by looking at the flame alone,
Like a small cloud ascending: so each flame moves
Along the ditch's gullet with not one

Showing its plunder, though every flame contrives
To steal away a sinner. I had climbed up
To balance where the bridge's high point gives

A better view, and if I didn't grip
A rock I would have fallen from where I stood
Without a push. Seeing how from the top

I gazed intently down, my master said,
50 "Within the flames are spirits; each one here
Enfolds himself in what burns him." I replied,

"My Master, to hear you say it makes me sure,
But I already thought it; already, too,
I wanted to ask you who is in that fire

Which at its top is so split into two
It seems to surge from the pyre Eteocles
Shared with his brother?" He answered, "In it go

Tormented Ulysses and Diomedes
Enduring vengeance together, as they did wrath;
60 And in their flame they grieve for their device,

The horse that made the doorway through which went forth
The Romans' noble seed. Within their fire
Now they lament the guile that even in death

- Piangevisi entro l'arte per che, morta,
Deïdamia ancor si duol d'Achille,
e del Palladio pena vi si porta».*
- «S'ei posson dentro da quelle faville
parlar», diss' io, «maestro, assai ten priego
e ripriego, che 'l priego vaglia mille,
che non mi facci de l'attender niego
fin che la fiamma cornuta qua vegna;
vedi che del disio ver' lei mi piego!».*
- 70 *Ed elli a me: «La tua preghiera è degna
di molta loda, e io però l'accetto;
ma fa che la tua lingua si sostegna.
Lascia parlare a me, ch'i' ho concetto
ciò che tu vuoi; ch'ei sarebbero schivi,
perch' e' fuor greci, forse del tuo detto».*
- Poi che la fiamma fu venuta quivi
dove parve al mio duca tempo e loco,
in questa forma lui parlare audivi:
«O voi che siete due dentro ad un foco,
80 s'io meritai di voi mentre ch'io vissi,
s'io meritai di voi assai o poco
quando nel mondo li alti versi scrissi,
non vi movete; ma l'un di voi dica
dove, per lui, perduto a morir gissi».*
- Lo maggior corno de la fiamma antica
cominciò a crollarsi mormorando,
pur come quella cui vento affatica;
indi la cima qua e là menando,
come fosse la lingua che parlasse,
90 gittò voce di fuori e disse: «Quando
mì diparti' da Circe, che sottrasse
me più d'un anno là presso a Gaeta,
prima che sì Enëa la nomasse,
né dolcezza di figlio, né la pieta
del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore
lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,
vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore
ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
e de li vizi umani e del valore;*

Makes Deidamia mourn Achilles, and there
They pay the price for the Palladium.”
“Master,” I said, “I earnestly implore,

If they can speak within those sparks of flame—
And pray my prayer be worth a thousand pleas—
Do not forbid my waiting here for them

70 Until their horned flame makes its way to us;
You see how yearningly it makes me lean.”
And he to me: “Your prayer is worthy of praise,

And therefore I accept it. But restrain
Your tongue, leave speech to me—Greeks that they were,
They might treat words of yours with some disdain.”

My master waited as the flame drew near
For the right place and moment to arrive,
Then spoke: “O you, who are two within one fire:

If I deserved of you while I was alive—
80 If I deserved anything great or small
From you when I wrote verse, then do not move;

But rather grant that one of you will tell
Whither, when lost, he went away to die.”
The greater horn of flame began to flail

And murmur like fire the wind beats, and to ply
Its tip which, as it vibrated here and there
Like a tongue in speech, flung out a voice to say:

“When Circe had detained me more than a year
There near Gaeta, before it had that name
90 Aeneas gave it, and I parted from her,

Not fondness for my son, nor any claim
Of reverence for my father, nor love I owed
Penelope, to please her, could overcome

My longing for experience of the world,
Of human vices and virtue. But I sailed out
On the deep open seas, accompanied

100 *ma misi me per l'alto mare aperto*
sol con un legno e con quella compagna
picciola da la qual non fui diserto.
L'un lito e l'altro vidi infin la Spagna,
fin nel Morrocco, e l'isola d'i Sardi,
e l'altre che quel mare intorno bagna.
Io e ' compagni eravam vecchi e tardi
quando venimmo a quella foce stretta
dov' Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi
 acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta;
 110 *da la man destra mi lasciai Sibilia,*
da l'altra già m'avea lasciata Setta.
"O frati", dissi, "che per cento milia
perigli siete giunti a l'occidente,
a questa tanto picciola vigilia
d'i nostri sensi ch'è del rimanente
non vogliate negar l'esperienza,
di retro al sol, del mondo senza gente.
Considerate la vostra semenza:
fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
 120 *ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza".*
Li miei compagni fec' io sì aguti,
con questa orazion picciola, al cammino,
che a pena poscia li avrei ritenuti;
e volta nostra poppa nel mattino,
de' remi facemmo ali al folle volo,
sempre acquistando dal lato mancino.
Tutte le stelle già de l'altro polo
vedea la notte, e 'l nostro tanto basso,
che non surgëa fuor del marin suolo.
 130 *Cinque volte raccesso e tante casso*
lo lume era di sotto da la luna,
poi che 'ntrati eravam ne l'alto passo,
quando n'apparve una montagna, bruna
per la distanza, e parvemi alta tanto
quanto veduta non avëa alcuna.

By that small company that still had not
Deserted me, in a single ship. One coast
I saw, and then another, and I got

100 As far as Spain, Morocco, Sardinia, a host
Of other islands that the sea bathes round.
My men and I were old and slow when we passed

The narrow outlet where Hercules let stand
His markers beyond which men were not to sail.
On my left hand I had left Ceuta behind,

And on the other sailed beyond Seville.
'O brothers who have reached the west,' I began,
'Through a hundred thousand perils, surviving all:

So little is the vigil we see remain
110 Still for our senses, that you should not choose
To deny it the experience—behind the sun

Leading us onward—of the world which has
No people in it. Consider well your seed:
You were not born to live as a mere brute does,

But for the pursuit of knowledge and the good.'
Then all of my companions grew so keen
To journey, spurred by this little speech I'd made,

I would have found them difficult to restrain.
Turning our stern toward the morning light,
120 We made wings of our oars, in an insane

Flight, always gaining on the left. The night
Showed all the stars, now, of the other pole—
Our own star fallen so low, no sign of it

Rose from the sea. The moon's low face glowed full
Five times since we set course across the deep,
And as many times was quenched invisible,

When dim in the distance we saw a mountaintop:
It seemed the highest I had ever seen.
We celebrated—but soon began to weep,

Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;
ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque
e percosse del legno il primo canto.
Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l'acque;
140 a la quarta levar la poppa in suso
e la prora ire in giù, com' altrui piacque,
infin che 'l mar fu sovra noi richiuso».

130 For from the newfound land a storm had grown,
Rising to strike the forepart of the ship.
It whirled the vessel round, and round again

With all the waters three times, lifting up
The stern the fourth—as pleased an Other—to press
The prow beneath the surface, and did not stop

Until the sea had closed up over us.”

- Già era dritta in sù la fiamma e queta
 per non dir più, e già da noi sen già
 con la licenza del dolce poeta,
 quand' un'altra, che dietro a lei venìa,
 ne fece volger li occhi a la sua cima
 per un confuso suon che fuor n'uscìa.
 Come 'l bue cicilian che mugghiò prima
 col pianto di colui, e ciò fu dritto,
 che l'avea temperato con sua lima,
 10 mugghiava con la voce de l'afflitto,
 sì che, con tutto che fosse di rame,
 pur el pareva dal dolor trafitto;
 così, per non aver via né forame
 dal principio nel foco, in suo linguaggio
 si convertian le parole grame.
 Ma poscia ch'ebber colto lor viaggio
 su per la punta, dandole quel guizzo
 che dato avea la lingua in lor passaggio,
 udimmo dire: «O tu a cu' io drizzo
 20 la voce e che parlavi mo lombardo,
 dicendo "Istra ten va, più non t'adizzo",
 perch' io sia giunto forse alquanto tardo,
 non t'incresca restare a parlar meco;
 vedi che non incresce a me, e ardo!
 Se tu pur mo in questo mondo cieco
 caduto se' di quella dolce terra
 latina ond' io mia colpa tutta reco,
 dimmi se Romagnuoli han pace o guerra;
 30 ch'io fui d'i monti là intra Orbino
 e 'l giogo di che Tever si diserra».

CANTO XXVII

The flame already was quiet and erect again,
Done speaking, and, as the gentle poet allowed,
Leaving us, when behind it another one

Was drawing near, the confused sound it made
Drawing our eyes toward its flickering tip.
As the Sicilian bull (which bellowed loud

For the first time when he who gave it shape
With his file's art was forced to give it his voice,
Justly) would use a victim's cries, sealed up

10 Inside its body, to bellow—so that, though brass,
It seemed transfixed with pain when it was heated:
So, having at first no passage or egress

From fire, the melancholy words were transmuted
Into fire's language. But after the words had found
Their passage through the tip, and it vibrated

As the tongue had in trying to form their sound,
We heard it say, "O you toward whom I guide
My voice, and who a moment ago intoned

In Lombard, 'Now continue on your road,
20 I do not ask you more'—though I may be
Late in my coming here, don't be annoyed

To stop and speak; you see that I am free
Of annoyance, though I burn. If you just fell
Into this viewless world from Italy,

Sweet land above, from which I carry all
My guilt, then tell me: is it peace or war
That occupies the Romagnoles?—I hail

From the hill country between Urbino and where,
High up the ridge, the Tiber has its source."
30 I was still crouched and intently giving ear

Io era in giuso ancora attento e chino,
 quando il mio duca mi tentò di costa,
 dicendo: «Parla tu; questi è latino».
 E io, ch'avea già pronta la risposta,
 senza indugio a parlare incominciai:
 «O anima che se' là giù nascosta,
 Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai,
 senza guerra ne' cuor de' suoi tiranni;
 ma 'n palese nessuna or vi lasciai.
 40 Ravenna sta come stata è molt' anni:
 l'aguglia da Polenta la si cova,
 sì che Cervia ricuopre co' suoi vanni.
 La terra che fé già la lunga prova
 e di Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,
 sotto le branche verdi si ritrova.
 E 'l mastin vecchio e 'l nuovo da Verrucchio,
 che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,
 là dove soglion fan d'i denti succhio.
 Le città di Lamone e di Santerno
 50 conduce il lioncel dal nido bianco,
 che muta parte da la state al verno.
 E quella cu' il Savio bagna il fianco,
 così com' ella sie' tra 'l piano e 'l monte,
 tra tirannia si vive e stato franco.
 Ora chi se', ti priego che ne conte;
 non esser duro più ch'altri sia stato,
 se 'l nome tuo nel mondo tegna fronte».
 Poscia che 'l foco alquanto ebbe rugghiato
 al modo suo, l'aguta punta mosse
 60 di qua, di là, e poi diè cotal fiato:
 «S'i' credesse che mia risposta fosse
 a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
 questa fiamma staria senza più scosse;
 ma però che già mai di questo fondo
 non tornò vivo alcun, s'i' odo il vero,
 senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

When my guide nudged me, saying, "You may discourse
With him: he is Italian." Already prepared
To answer, I said: "That Romagna of yours,

O soul concealed below, is not yet cleared
And never was—in her tyrants' hearts—of war:
Though when I left, no war had been declared.

Ravenna still remains as many a year,
Polenta's eagle brooding above the town
So its wings cover Cervia. The land that bore

40 The long siege, once, and struck the Frenchmen down
Into a bloody heap, finds itself now
Held underneath the Green Paws once again.

Both the old mastiff and new of Verrucchio,
Who treated Montagna in an evil way,
Sink their teeth in, the way they always do.

Along the Santerno and the Lamone lie
Cities the Lionet of the White Lair rules,
Who changes sides and shifts his loyalty

50 From summer to winter. And the town that feels
The Savio bathe its flank, just as it lies
Between a plain and mountains, also dwells

Somewhere between tyranny's and freedom's ways.
And now I pray you—tell us who you are.
Don't be more grudging than another was

In answering you, so may your name endure,
Proudly in the world above." After the fire
Roared in its way awhile, it began to stir

60 Its sharp tip rapidly, first here, then there,
Then formed this breath: "If I believed I gave
My answer to one who'd ever go once more

Back to the world, this tongue of flame would have
No motion. But since, if what I hear is true,
None ever returned from this abyss alive,

Io fui uom d'arme, e poi fui cordigliero,
 credendomi, sì cinto, fare ammenda;
 e certo il creder mio venìa intero,
 70 se non fosse il gran prete, a cui mal prenda!,
 che mi rimise ne le prime colpe;
 e come e quare, voglio che m'intenda.
 Mentre ch'io forma fui d'ossa e di polpe
 che la madre mi diè, l'opere mie
 non furon leonine, ma di volpe.
 Li accorgimenti e le coperte vie
 io seppi tutte, e sì menai lor arte,
 ch'al fine de la terra il suono uscie.
 Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte
 80 di mia etade ove ciascun dovrebbe
 calar le vele e raccoglièr le sarte,
 ciò che pria mi piacèa, allor m'increbbe,
 e pentuto e confesso mi rendei;
 ah! miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe.
 Lo principe d'i novi Farisei,
 avendo guerra presso a Laterano,
 e non con Saracin né con Giudei,
 ché ciascun suo nimico era cristiano,
 e nessun era stato a vincer Acri
 90 né mercatante in terra di Soldano,
 né sommo officio né ordini sacri
 guardò in sé, né in me quel capestro
 che solea fare i suoi cinti più macri.
 Ma come Costantin chiese Silvestro
 d'entro Siratti a guerir de la lebbre,
 così mi chiese questi per maestro

Not fearing infamy I will answer you.
I was a man of arms, and after that
Became a corded friar, hopeful to do

Penance by wearing the rope; indeed that thought
Might well have been fulfilled, but the High Priest—
May evil befall him!—led me to commit

70 Again the sins that I had practiced at first:
And how and why, now listen and I'll disclose.
My actions, when my form was still encased

In the flesh and bones my mother gave me, were those
Of the fox, not the lion. I was expert
In all the stratagems and covert ways,

And practiced them with so much cunning art
The sound extended to the earth's far end.
But when I saw that I had reached that part

Of life when we should let our sails descend
80 And coil the ropes—then what had pleased me before
Now grieved me: penitent and confessed, I joined

An order and—woe to say!—my life as friar
Would have availed me. The Prince of new Pharisees
Nearby the Lateran was making war,

And not against the Saracens or Jews,
His enemies all being Christians: and none
Had been at Acre's conquest, nor one of those

Who went as merchants to the Sultan's domain;
And he respected neither the supreme
90 Office and holy orders that were his own,

Nor in me the friar's cord which at one time
Made those who wore it leaner. As Constantine
Sought out Sylvester in Soracte, his aim

To have him cure his leprosy—this man
Came seeking me as one who meant to find
A doctor to cure the fever he was in,

a guerir de la sua superba febbre;
 domandommi consiglio, e io tacetti
 perché le sue parole parver ebbre.
 100 E' poi ridisse: "Tuo cuor non sospetti;
 finor t'assolvo, e tu m'insegna fare
 sì come Penestrino in terra getti.
 Lo ciel poss' io serrare e diserrare,
 come tu sai; però son due le chiavi
 che 'l mio antecessor non ebbe care".
 Allor mi pinser li argomenti gravi
 là 've 'l tacer mi fu avviso 'l peggio,
 e dissi: "Padre, da che tu mi lavi
 110 di quel peccato ov'io mo cader deggio,
 lunga promessa con l'attender corto
 ti farà triunfar ne l'alto seggio".
 Francesco venne poi, com' io fu' morto,
 per me; ma un d'i neri cherubini
 li disse: "Non portar; non mi far torto.
 Venir se ne dee giù tra ' miei meschini
 perché diede 'l consiglio frodolente,
 dal quale in qua stato li sono a' crini;
 ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,
 né pentere e volere insieme puossi
 120 per la contradizion che nol consente".
 Oh me dolente! come mi riscossi
 quando mi prese dicendomi: "Forse
 tu non pensavi ch'io löico fossi!".
 A Minòs mi portò; e quelli attorse
 otto volte la coda al dosso duro;
 e poi che per gran rabbia la si morse,
 disse: "Questi è d'i rei del foco furo";
 per ch'io là dove vedi son perduto,
 e sì vestito, andando, mi rancuro».

Of pride. He asked my counsel, and I remained
Silent, because his words seemed drunk to me.
And then he spoke again: 'Now understand,

100 Your heart should not respond mistrustfully,
For I absolve you in advance, henceforth:
Instruct me, so that I can find a way

To level Palestrina to the earth.
I have the power to lock and unlock Heaven,
As you know; for the keys are two, whose worth

Seemed not dear to my predecessor.' Then, driven
To where the gravity of his argument
Made silence seem worse counsel, I said: 'Given,

Father, that you are washing me of the taint
110 Of this sin into which I now must fall—
Large promises with fulfillments that are scant

Will bring your high throne triumph over all.'
And Francis came for me the moment I died,
But one of these black cherubim of Hell

Appeared; and, 'Do not carry him off,' it said,
'Do not deprive me: he must be carried down
Among my servants, because he counseled fraud,

And I have hovered near his hair since then,
Until this moment—for no one has absolution
120 Without repenting; nor can one will a sin

And repent at once, because the contradiction
Precludes it.' How I shuddered—O wretched me!
'Perhaps you did not think I was a logician,'

He said, and took me, and carried me away
To Minos, who coiled his tail eight times around
His scaly back, and gnawed it angrily

And then declared, 'This wicked one is bound
For the fire of thievery.' So I am lost
Where you see me wander, in this garment wound,

130 *Quand' elli ebbe 'l suo dir così compiuto,
 la fiamma dolorando si partio,
 torcendo e dibattendo 'l corno aguto.*
*Noi passamm' oltre, e io e 'l duca mio,
 su per lo scoglio infino in su l'altr' arco
 che cuopre 'l fosso in che si paga il fio
a quei che scommettendo acquistan carco.*

130 Bitter to myself." And as his discourse ceased
The grieving flame departed, its horn's sharp point
Tossing about and twisting as it passed.

We journeyed on, my leader and I, and went
To the next arch of the ridge: and looking under,
We saw the fosse where they pay the due amount
Who earned their burden by splitting things asunder.

Chi poria mai pur con parole sciolte
 dicer del sangue e de le piaghe a pieno
 ch'i' ora vidi, per narrar più volte?
 Ogne lingua per certo verria meno
 per lo nostro sermone e per la mente
 c'hanno a tanto comprender poco seno.
 S'el s'aunasse ancor tutta la gente
 che già, in su la fortunata terra
 di Puglia, fu del suo sangue dolente
 10 per li Troiani e per la lunga guerra
 che de l'anella fé sì alte spoglie,
 come Livio scrive, che non erra,
 con quella che sentio di colpi doglie
 per contastare a Ruberto Guiscardo;
 e l'altra il cui ossame ancor s'accoglie
 a Ceperan, là dove fu bugiardo
 ciascun Pugliese, e là da Tagliacozzo,
 dove sanz' arme vinse il vecchio Alardo;
 e qual forato suo membro e qual mozzo
 20 mostrasse, d'aequar sarebbe nulla
 il modo de la nona bolgia sozzo.
 Già veggia, per mezzul perdere o lulla,
 com' io vidi un, così non si pertugia,
 rotto dal mento infin dove si trulla.
 Tra le gambe pendevan le minugia;
 la corata pareva e 'l tristo sacco
 che merda fa di quel che si trangugia.
 Mentre che tutto in lui veder m'attacco,
 guardommi e con le man s'aperse il petto,
 30 dicendo: «Or vedi com' io mi dilacco!

CANTO XXVIII

Who could find words, even in free-running prose,
For the blood and wounds I saw, in all their horror—
Telling it over as often as you choose,

It's certain no human tongue could take the measure
Of those enormities. Our speech and mind,
Straining to comprehend them, flail, and falter.

If all the Apulians who long ago mourned
Their lives cut off by Trojans could live once more,
Assembled to grieve again with all those stained

10 By their own blood in the long Carthaginian war—
Rings pillaged from their corpses poured by the bushel,
As Livy writes, who never was known to err—

And they who took their mortal blows in battle
With Robert Guiscard, and those whose bones were heaped
At Ceperano, killed in the Puglian betrayal,

And the soldiers massacred in the stratagem shaped
By old Alardo, who conquered without a weapon
Near Tagliacozzo when their army was trapped—

20 And some were showing wounds still hot and open,
Others the gashes where severed limbs had been:
It would be nothing to equal the mutilation

I saw in that Ninth Chasm. No barrel staved-in
And missing its end-piece ever gaped as wide
As the man I saw split open from his chin

Down to the farting-place, and from the splayed
Trunk the spilled entrails dangled between his thighs.
I saw his organs, and the sack that makes the bread

30 We swallow turn to shit. Seeing my eyes
Fastened upon him, he pulled open his chest
With both hands, saying, "Look how Mohammed claws

vedi come storpiato è Mäometto!
 Dinanzi a me sen va piangendo Ali,
 fesso nel volto dal mento al ciuffetto.
 E tutti li altri che tu vedi qui,
 seminator di scandalo e di scisma
 fuor vivi, e però son fessi così.
 Un diavolo è qua dietro che n'accisma
 sì crudelmente, al taglio de la spada
 rimettendo ciascun di questa risma,
 40 quand' avem volta la dolente strada;
 però che le ferite son richiuse
 prima ch'altri dinanzi li rivada.
 Ma tu chi se' che 'n su lo scoglio muse,
 forse per indugiar d'ire a la pena
 ch'è giudicata in su le tue accuse?».

«Né morte 'l giunse ancor, né colpa 'l mena»,
 rispuose 'l mio maestro, «a tormentarlo;
 ma per dar lui esperienza piena,
 a me, che morto son, convien menarlo
 50 per lo 'nferno qua giù di giro in giro;
 e quest' è ver così com' io ti parlo».

Più fuor di cento che, quando l'udiro,
 s'arrestaron nel fosso a riguardarmi
 per meraviglia, obliando il martiro.
 «Or dì a fra Dolcin dunque che s'armi,
 tu che forse vedrà il sole in breve,
 s'ello non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,
 sì di vivanda, che stretta di neve
 non rechi la vittoria al Noarese,
 60 ch'altrimenti acquistar non saria leve».

Poi che l'un piè per girsene sospese,
 Mäometto mi disse esta parola;
 indi a partirsi in terra lo distese.
 Un altro, che forata avea la gola
 e tronco 'l naso infin sotto le ciglia,
 e non avea mai ch'una orecchia sola,
 ristato a riguardar per meraviglia
 con li altri, innanzi a li altri aprì la canna,
 ch'era di fuor d'ogne parte vermiglia,

And mangles himself, torn open down the breast!
Look how I tear myself! And Ali goes
Weeping before me—like me, a schismatic, and cleft:

Split open from the chin along his face
Up to the forelock. All you see here, when alive,
Taught scandal and schism, so they are cleavered like this.

A devil waits with a sword back there to carve
Each of us open afresh each time we've gone
Our circuit round this road, where while we grieve

40 Our wounds close up before we pass him again—
But who are you that stand here, perhaps to delay
Torments pronounced on your own false words to men?"

"Neither has death yet reached him, nor does he stay
For punishment of guilt," my master replied,
"But for experience. And for that purpose I,

Who am dead, lead him through Hell as rightful guide,
From circle to circle. Of this, you can be as sure
As that I speak to you here at his side."

More than a hundred shades were gathered there
50 Who hearing my master's words had halted, and came
Along the trench toward me in order to stare,

Forgetting their torment in wonder for a time.
"Tell Fra Dolcino, you who may see the sun,
If he wants not to follow soon to the same

Punishment, he had better store up grain
Against a winter siege and the snows' duress,
Or the Novarese will easily bring him down"—

After he had lifted his foot to resume the pace,
Mohammed spoke these words, and having spoken
60 He stepped away again on his painful course.

Another there, whose face was cruelly broken,
The throat pierced through, the nose cut off at the brow,
One ear remaining, stopped and gazed at me, stricken

- 70 e disse: «O tu cui colpa non condanna
e cu' io vidi in su terra latina,
se troppa simiglianza non m'inganna,
rimembriti di Pier da Medicina,
se mai torni a veder lo dolce piano
che da Vercelli a Marcabò dichina.
E fa sapere a' due miglior da Fano,
a messer Guido e anco ad Angiolello,
che, se l'antiveder qui non è vano,
gittati saran fuor di lor vasello
80 e mazzerati presso a la Cattolica
per tradimento d'un tiranno fello.
Tra l'isola di Cipri e di Maiolica
non vide mai sì gran fallo Nettuno,
non da pirate, non da gente argolica.
Quel traditor che vede pur con l'uno,
e tien la terra che tale qui meco
vorrebbe di vedere esser digiuno,
farà venirli a parlamento seco;
poi farà sì, ch'al vento di Focara
90 non sarà lor mestier voto né preco».
E io a lui: «Dimostrami e dichiara,
se vuo' ch'i' porti sù di te novella,
chi è colui da la veduta amara».
Allor puose la mano a la mascella
d'un suo compagno e la bocca li aperse,
gridando: «Questi è desso, e non favella.
Questi, scacciato, il dubitar sommerse
in Cesare, affermando che 'l fornito
sempre con danno l'attender sofferse».
100 Oh quanto mi pareva sbigottito
con la lingua tagliata ne la strozza
Curio, ch'a dir fu così ardito!
E un ch'avea l'una e l'altra man mozza,
levando i moncherin per l'aura fosca,
sì che 'l sangue facea la faccia sozza,

With recognition as well as wonder. "Ah, you,"
His bleeding throat spoke, "you here, yet not eternally
Doomed here by guilt—unless I'm deceived, I knew

Your face when I still walked above in Italy.
If you return to the sweet plain I knew well
That slopes toward Marcabò from Vercelli,

70 Remember Pier da Medicina. And tell
Ser Guido and Angiolello, the two best men
Of Fano: if we have foresight here in Hell

Then by a tyrant's treachery they will drown
Off La Cattolica—bound and thrown in the sea
From their ships. Neptune has never seen, between

Cyprus and Majorca, whether committed by
Pirates or Argives, such a crime. The betrayer
Who sees from one eye only (he holds a city

Found bitter by another who's with me here)
80 Will lure them to set sail for truce-talks: then,
When he has dealt with them, they'll need no prayer

For safe winds near Focara—not ever again."
Then I to him: "If you'd have me be the bearer
Of news from you to those above, explain—

What man do you mean, who found a city bitter?"
Then he grasped one shade near him by the jaw,
And opened the mouth, and said, "This is the creature,

He does not speak, who once, in exile, knew
Words to persuade Caesar at the Rubicon—
90 Affirming, to help him thrust his doubt below,

'Delaying when he's ready hurts a man.'"
I saw how helpless Curio's tongue was cut
To a stub in his throat, whose speech had been so keen.

One with both hands lopped off came forward to shout,
Stumps raised in the murk to spatter his cheeks with blood,
"Also remember Mosca! I too gave out

gridò: «Ricordera'ti anche del Mosca,
 che disse, lasso!, "Capo ha cosa fatta",
 che fu mal seme per la gente toska».
 E io li aggiunsi: «E morte di tua schiatta»;
 110 per ch'elli, accumulando duol con duolo,
 sen gio come persona trista e matta.
 Ma io rimasi a riguardar lo stuolo,
 e vidi cosa ch'io avrei paura,
 senza più prova, di contarla solo;
 se non che coscienza m'assicura,
 la buona compagnia che l'uom francheggia
 sotto l'asbergo del sentirsi pura.
 Io vidi certo, e ancor par ch'io 'l veggia,
 un busto senza capo andar sì come
 120 andavan li altri de la trista greggia;
 e 'l capo tronco tenea per le chiome,
 pesol con mano a guisa di lanterna:
 e quel mirava noi e dicea: «Oh me!».

Di sé facea a sé stesso lucerna,
 ed eran due in uno e uno in due;
 com' esser può, quei sa che sì governa.
 Quando diritto al piè del ponte fue,
 levò 'l braccio alto con tutta la testa
 per appressarne le parole sue,
 130 che fuoro: «Or vedi la pena molesta,
 tu che, spirando, vai veggendo i morti:
 vedi s'alcuna è grande come questa.
 E perché tu di me novella porti,
 sappi ch'i' son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli
 che diedi al re giovane i ma' conforti.
 Io feci il padre e 'l figlio in sé ribelli;
 Achitofel non fé più d'Absalone
 e di David coi malvagi punzelli.
 Perch' io parti' così giunte persone,
 140 partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso!,
 dal suo principio ch'è in questo troncone.
 Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso».

A slogan urging bloodshed, when I said
‘Once done it’s done with’: words which were seeds of pain
For the Tuscan people.” Then, when he heard me add,

100 “—and death to your family line,” utterly undone
By sorrow heaped upon his sorrow, the soul
Went away like one whom grief has made insane.

I stayed to see more, one sight so incredible
As I should fear to describe, except that conscience,
Being pure in this, encourages me to tell:

I saw—and writing it now, my brain still envisions—
A headless trunk that walked, in sad promenade
Shuffling the dolorous track with its companions,

And the trunk was carrying the severed head,
110 Gripping its hair like a lantern, letting it swing,
And the head looked up at us: “Oh me!” it cried.

He was himself and his lamp as he strode along,
Two in one, and one in two—and how it can be,
Only He knows, who so ordains the thing.

Reaching the bridge, the trunk held the head up high
So we could hear his words, which were “Look well,
You who come breathing to view the dead, and say

If there is punishment harder than mine in Hell.
Carry the word, and know me: Bertran de Born,
120 Who made the father and the son rebel

The one against the other, by the evil turn
I did the young king, counseling him to ill.
David and Absalom had nothing worse to learn

From the wickedness contrived by Achitophel.
Because I parted their union, I carry my brain
Parted from this, its pitiful stem: Mark well

This retribution that you see is mine.”

- La molta gente e le diverse piaghe
 avean le luci mie sì inebriate,
 che de lo stare a piangere eran vaghe.
 Ma Virgilio mi disse: «Che pur guate?
 perché la vista tua pur si soffolge
 là giù tra l'ombre triste smozzicate?
 Tu non hai fatto sì a l'altre bolge;
 pensa, se tu annoverar le credi,
 che miglia ventidue la valle volge.
 10 E già la luna è sotto i nostri piedi;
 lo tempo è poco omai che n'è concesso,
 e altro è da veder che tu non vedi».
 «Se tu avessi», rispuos' io appresso,
 «atteso a la cagion per ch'io guardava,
 forse m'avresti ancor lo star dimesso».
 Parte sen giva, e io retro li andava,
 lo duca, già faccendo la risposta,
 e soggiugnendo: «Dentro a quella cava
 dov' io tenea or li occhi sì a posta,
 20 credo ch'un spirto del mio sangue pianga
 la colpa che là giù cotanto costa».
 Allor disse 'l maestro: «Non si franga
 lo tuo pensier da qui innanzi sovr' ello.
 Attendi ad altro, ed ei là si rimanga;
 ch'io vidi lui a piè del ponticello
 mostrarti e minacciar forte col dito,
 e udi' 'l nominar Geri del Bello.
 Tu eri allor sì del tutto impedito
 sovra colui che già tenne Altaforte,
 30 che non guardasti in là, sì fu partito».

CANTO XXIX

That mass of people wounded so curiously
Had made my eyes so drunk they had a passion
To stay and weep. But Virgil said to me,

“What are you staring at? Why let your vision
Linger there down among the disconsolate
And mutilated shades? You found no reason

To delay like this at any other pit.
Consider, if counting them is what you plan:
This valley extends along a circular route

10 For twenty-two miles. And already the moon
Is under our feet: the time we are allowed
Has now grown short, and more is to be seen

Than you see here.” “If you had given heed
To what my reason is for looking, perhaps
You would have granted a longer stay,” I said.

Meanwhile my guide went on, and in his steps
I followed while I answered—but told him, too,
“Inside that hollow, where for a little lapse

20 Of time I gazed so steadily just now,
I think a spirit of my own blood laments
The guilt that brings so great a cost below.”

The master answered, “Let your intelligence
Distract itself with thoughts of him no more.
Attend to other things, while he remains

Down where he is, below the bridge—for there
I saw him with his finger point you out
And fiercely threaten you. And I could hear

30 Them call him Geri del Bello. So complete
Was your preoccupation with the one
Who once held Altaforte, you never set

«O duca mio, la vïolenta morte
 che non li è vendicata ancor», diss' io,
 «per alcun che de l'onta sia consorte,
 fece lui disdegnoso; ond' el sen gio
 senza parlar mi, sì com' ò estimo:
 e in ciò m'ha el fatto a sé più pio».
 Così parlammo infino al loco primo
 che de lo scoglio l'altra valle mostra,
 se più lume vi fosse, tutto ad imo.
 40 Quando noi fummo sor l'ultima chiostra
 di Malebolge, sì che i suoi conversi
 potean parere a la veduta nostra,
 lamenti saettaron me diversi,
 che di pietà ferrati avean li strali;
 ond' io li orecchi con le man copersi.
 Qual dolor fora, se de li spedali
 di Valdichiana tra 'l luglio e 'l settembre
 e di Maremma e di Sardigna i mali
 fossero in una fossa tutti 'nsempre,
 50 tal era quivi, e tal puzzo n'usciva
 qual suol venir de le marcite membre.
 Noi discendemmo in su l'ultima riva
 del lungo scoglio, pur da man sinistra;
 e allor fu la mia vista più viva
 giù ver' lo fondo, là 've la ministra
 de l'alto Sire infallibil giustizia
 punisce i falsador che qui registra.
 Non credo ch'a veder maggior tristizia
 fosse in Egina il popol tutto infermo,
 60 quando fu l'aere sì pien di malizia,

Your eyes in his direction till he was gone."

And "O my guide," I said, "his violent death,
For which as yet no vengeance has been done

By any of those he shares dishonor with,
Is what has made him full of indignation—
And that is why he continued on his path

Without addressing me, and with this action
He makes my pity for him greater yet."
So we continued in our conversation,

40 Walking the ridge until we reached the spot
Where the next valley could first be seen below—
Down to the bottom, had there been more light.

Up above Malebolge's last cloister now
Where we could see its lay-brothers under us,
Their strange laments beset me, each an arrow

Whose shaft was barbed with pity—and at this,
I lifted up my hands and blocked my ears.
The suffering was such, if one could place

All of the sick who endure disease's course
50 In Val di Chiana's hospital from July
All through September, and all the sufferers

In Maremma and Sardinia, to lie
All in one ditch together, so was this place;
From it a stench, like that which usually

Is given off by festering limbs, arose.
Keeping as ever to the left, on down
We came, to the ridge's final bank. The fosse

Grew clearer to my sight, in which the one
Who serves as minister of the Lord on high,
60 Unerring Justice, lets her punishments rain

Upon the shades whose sin is to falsify;
She has recorded them upon her scroll.
I think it could not have been sadder to see

che li animali, infino al picciol vermo,
 cascaron tutti, e poi le genti antiche,
 secondo che i poeti hanno per fermo,
 si ristorar di seme di formiche;
 ch'era a veder per quella oscura valle
 languir li spirti per diverse biche.
 Qual sovra 'l ventre e qual sovra le spalle
 l'un de l'altro giacea, e qual carpone
 si trasmutava per lo tristo calle.
 70 Passo passo andavam senza sermone,
 guardando e ascoltando li ammalati,
 che non potean levar le lor persone.
 Io vidi due sedere a sé poggianti,
 com' a scaldar si poggia tegghia a tegghia,
 dal capo al piè di schianze macolati;
 e non vidi già mai menare stregghia
 a ragazzo aspettato dal signorso,
 né a colui che mal volontier vegghia,
 come ciascun menava spesso il morso
 80 de l'unghie sopra sé per la gran rabbia
 del pizzicor, che non ha più soccorso;
 e sì traevan giù l'unghie la scabbia,
 come coltel di scardova le scaglie
 o d'altro pesce che più larghe l'abbia.
 «O tu che con le dita ti dismaglie»,
 cominciò 'l duca mio a l'un di loro,
 «e che fai d'esse talvolta tanaglie,
 dinne s'alcun Latino è tra costoro
 che son quinc' entro, se l'unghia ti basti
 90 etternalmente a cotesto lavoro».

Aegina's whole population fallen ill
When such corruption crowded through the air
That, down to the small worms, every animal

Succumbed (and afterward, the poets aver
As certain, the ancient populace was restored
Out of the seed of ants) than to see there,

70 All through that murky valley, how a horde
Of shades lay languishing in scattered heaps:
One lay upon his belly, another poured

Across his neighbor's shoulders, or perhaps
Moved on all fours along the dismal track.
In silence, walking with deliberate steps,

We went on, watching and listening to the sick,
Who could not raise their bodies. I could see
Two who were sitting propped up back to back,

80 As pan is leaned against pan to warm them dry,
Each of them spotted with scabs from head to foot.
And I have never seen a stableboy

Who knows that he is making his master wait,
Or one unhappy to be still awake,
Work with a currycomb at such a rate

As each of these was laboring to rake
His nails all over himself—scratching and digging
For the great fury of the itch they tried to slake,

Which has no other relief: their nails were snagging
Scabs from the skin as a knifeblade might remove
90 Scales from a carp, or as if the knife were dragging

Still larger scales some other fish might have.
“O you who with your fingers scrape the mail
From your own flesh, and sometimes make them serve

As pincers: say if any of these who dwell
Below here with you come from Italy,
So may your nails suffice you in this toil

«Latin siam noi, che tu vedi sì guasti
 qui ambedue», rispuose l'un piangendo;
 «ma tu chi se' che di noi dimandasti?».

E 'l duca disse: «I' son un che discendo
 con questo vivo giù di balzo in balzo,
 e di mostrar lo 'nferno a lui intendo».

Allor si ruppe lo comun rincalzo;
 e tremando ciascuno a me si volse
 con altri che l'udiron di rimbalzo.

100 Lo buon maestro a me tutto s'accolse,
 dicendo: «Dì a lor ciò che tu vuoi»;
 e io incominciai, poscia ch'ei volse:
 «Se la vostra memoria non s'imboli
 nel primo mondo da l'umane menti,
 ma s'ella viva sotto molti soli,
 ditemi chi voi siete e di che genti;
 la vostra sconcia e fastidiosa pena
 di palesarvi a me non vi spaventi».

«Io fui d'Arezzo, e Albergo da Siena».

110 rispuose l'un, «mi fé mettere al foco;
 ma quel per ch'io morì qui non mi mena.
 Vero è ch'ì' dissi lui, parlando a gioco:
 "I' mi saprei levar per l'aere a volo";
 e quei, ch'avea vaghezza e senno poco,
 volle ch'ì' li mostrassi l'arte; e solo
 perch' io nol feci Dedalo, mi fece
 ardere a tal che l'avea per figliuolo.

Ma ne l'ultima bolgia de le diece
 me per l'alchìmia che nel mondo usai
 120 dannò Minòs, a cui fallar non lece».

That you perform throughout eternity—”
My leader said, addressing one of the two.
“Both of us are Italians, whom you see

100 Disfigured here,” he answered, weeping. “But who
Are you, who ask us?” My guide said, “I am one
Who accompanies this living man; we go

Downward from level to level, and I mean
To show him Hell.” Their mutual support
Was broken at his words; they turned to lean

Closer to me, both trembling and alert,
With others who overheard what he had said.
Drawing near me, my good master said, “Now start:

Speak to them as you choose.” So I complied,
110 Beginning thus: “So that your memory
In men’s minds in the former world won’t fade

But live on under many suns, tell me
Who you and your people are; your punished state,
Loathsome and hideous although it be,

Should not discourage you from speaking out.”
“I was of Arezzo,” one answered, “and died by fire
At Albergo of Siena’s orders, and yet

That which I died for is not what brought me here.
The truth is that I told him, speaking in jest,
120 That I knew how to lift myself through air,

In flight: he, curious, but not much blessed
With wit, asked me to train him in that skill;
I failed to make him Daedalus—which sufficed

For him to have me burned: the sentence fell
On me from one who held him as a son.
But alchemy, which I plied in the world so well,

Is why I was doomed to this last ditch of ten
By Minos, who cannot err in his decrees.”
I asked the poet, “Has there ever been

E io dissi al poeta: «Or fu già mai
 gente sì vana come la sanese?
 Certo non la francesca sì d'assail!».

Onde l'altro lebbroso, che m'intese,
 rispuose al detto mio: «Tra'mene Stricca
 che seppe far le temperate spese,
 e Niccolò che la costuma ricca
 del garofano prima discoverse
 ne l'orto dove tal seme s'appicca;
 130 e tra'ne la brigata in che disperse
 Caccia d'Ascian la vigna e la gran fonda,
 e l'Abbagliato suo senno proferse.

Ma perché sappi chi sì ti seconda
 contra i Sanesi, aguzza ver' me l'occhio,
 sì che la faccia mia ben ti risponda:
 sì vedrai ch'io son l'ombra di Capocchio,
 che falsai li metalli con l'alchìmia;
 e te dee ricordar, se ben t'adocchio,
 com'io fui di natura buona scimia».

130 Another people as vain as the Sieneſe?
Certainly not the French themſelves, by far.”
The other leprous one, at hearing this,

Reſponded, “Some, you’ll grant exceptions for:
Stricca, who knew how to ſpend in moderation,
And Niccolò, who was progenitor

Of the coſtly cult of cloves—a fine tradition
For the rich garden where ſuch ſeeds take root.
And let that company alſo be an exception

Where Caccia d’Aſciano freely ſpent out
140 His vineyard and his foreſt, and where the one
They nicknamed Muddlehead diſplayed his wit.

But ſo you know who ſeconds you in this vein
Against the Sieneſe, come ſharpener your gaze
In my direction, where you may well diſcern

The answer given to you by my face:
I am Capocchio’s ſhade—the counterfeit
Of metals by alchemy; if I truſt my eyes,

You recall how good I was at aping nature.”

Nel tempo che Iunone era crucciata
 per Semele contra 'l sangue tebano,
 come mostrò una e altra fiata,
 Atamante divenne tanto insano,
 che veggendo la moglie con due figli
 andar carcata da ciascuna mano,
 gridò: «Tendiam le reti, sì ch'io pigli
 la leonessa e ' leoncini al varco»;
 e poi distese i dispietati artigli,
 10 prendendo l'un ch'avea nome Learco,
 e rotollo e percosselo ad un sasso;
 e quella s'annegò con l'altro carco.
 E quando la fortuna volse in basso
 l'altezza de' Troian che tutto ardiva,
 sì che 'nsieme col regno il re fu casso,
 Ecuba trista, misera e cattiva,
 poscia che vide Polissena morta,
 e del suo Polidoro in su la riva
 del mar si fu la dolorosa accorta,
 20 forsennata latrò sì come cane;
 tanto il dolor le fé la mente torta.
 Ma né di Tebe furie né troiane
 si vider mai in alcun tanto crude,
 non punger bestie, nonché membra umane,
 quant' io vidi in due ombre smorte e nude,
 che mordendo correvan di quel modo
 che 'l porco quando del porcil si schiude.
 L'una giunse a Capocchio, e in sul nodo
 del collo l'assannò, sì che, tirando,
 30 grattar li fece il ventre al fondo sodo.
 E l'Aretin che rimase tremando,
 mi disse: «Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi,
 e va rabbioso altrui così conciando».

CANTO XXX

Once, in the time when Juno was furious
With the Theban blood because of Semele—
As more than once she showed them—Athamas

Grew so insane that, seeing his wife walk by
Carrying their children one on either hand,
He cried: "Come, let us spread the nets and try

To take the lioness with the cubs she spawned,
As they pass by!" And reaching out to strike
With pitiless claws, he took the one they named

10 Learchus, and whirled him, and dashed him on a rock;
She drowned herself and the other child she held.
And when Fortune brought down the Trojans, who took

Risks proudly once, all-daring—their kingdom quelled
And blotted out entirely with their king—
Hecuba, wretched, a captive, after they killed

Polyxena with her there witnessing,
Saw her Polydorus washed ashore: the weight
Of sorrow drove her mad, her soul so wrung

She began barking like a dog. And yet,
20 No fury of Thebes or Troy was ever seen
So cruel—not any rending of beasts, and not

Tearing of human limbs—as I saw shown
By two pale, naked shades who now ran up
Biting, the way a pig does loosed from the pen.

One charged Capocchio and bit his nape,
And sank his tusks in deep, and dragged him along
On the hard bottom, letting his belly scrape.

The spirit from Arezzo, shivering
Where he was left, told me, "That monstrousness
30 Is Gianni Schicchi; he runs rabid among

«Oh» diss' io lui, «se l'altro non ti ficchi
 li denti a dosso, non ti sia fatica
 a dir chi è, pria che di qui si spicchi».
 Ed elli a me: «Quell' è l'anima antica
 di Mirra scellerata, che divenne
 al padre, fuor del dritto amore, amica.
 40 Questa a peccar con esso così venne,
 falsificando sé in altrui forma,
 come l'altro che là sen va, sostenne,
 per guadagnar la donna de la torma,
 falsificare in sé Buoso Donati,
 testando e dando al testamento norma».
 E poi che i due rabbiosi fuor passati
 sovra cu' io avea l'occhio tenuto,
 rivolsilo a guardar li altri mal nati.
 Io vidi un, fatto a guisa di lèuto,
 50 pur ch'elli avesse avuta l'anguinaia
 tronca da l'altro che l'uomo ha forcuto.
 La grave idropesi, che sì dispaia
 le membra con l'omor che mal converte,
 che 'l viso non risponde a la ventraia,
 faceva lui tener le labbra aperte
 come l'etico fa, che per la sete
 l'un verso 'l mento e l'altro in sù rinverte.
 «O voi che sanz' alcuna pena siete,
 e non so io perché, nel mondo gramo»,
 60 diss' elli a noi, «guardate e attendete
 a la miseria del maestro Adamo;
 io ebbi, vivo, assai di quel ch'i' volli,
 e ora, lasso!, un gocciol d'acqua bramo.
 Li ruscelletti che d'i verdi colli
 del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
 faccendo i lor canali freddi e molli,

The others here, and graces them like this."

"Oh," I responded, "so may that other one
Not fix its teeth on you, disclose to us

What shade it is—before it bolts again."

He answered, "That one is the ancient soul
Of Myrrha the infamous, whose love was drawn

Toward her father beyond what's honorable.

She engaged in sin with him by falsifying
Herself as someone else; and Schicchi as well,

40 Who runs off yonder, counterfeited: when trying
To acquire the finest lady of the herd,
He pretended he was Buoso Donati dying

And willed himself a legacy, each word
In proper form." When both of the raging pair
On whom I kept my eyes had disappeared,

I turned to see the ill-born others there:
One would be shaped exactly like a lute
Had he been cut off at the groin, from where

A man is forked. The heavy dropsical state,
50 Which makes the body's members so ill sorted
With undigested humors the face seems not

To answer to the swollen belly, had parted
His lips—the way the hectic being spurred
By thirst curls one lip up, the other distorted

Toward the chin. He said, "You who have fared
To this unhappy world, and yet arrive
Unpunished—I know not why—think, and regard

The misery of Master Adam. Alive,
I had in abundance all I wanted; now,
60 Alas! one drop of water is what I crave.

The rivulets that down to the Arno flow
From the green hills of Casentino, and make
Their channels cool and spongy as they go,

*sempre mi stanno innanzi, e non indarno,
ché l'immagine lor vie più m'asciuga
che 'l male ond' io nel volto mi discarno.*

70 *La rigida giustizia che mi fruga
tragge cagion del loco ov' io peccai
a metter più li miei sospiri in fuga.
Ivi è Romena, là dov' io falsai
la lega suggellata del Batista;
per ch'io il corpo sù arso lasciai.
Ma s'io vedessi qui l'anima trista
di Guido o d'Alessandro o di lor frate,
per Fonte Branda non darei la vista.
Dentro c'è l'una già, se l'arrabbiate*

80 *ombre che vanno intorno dicon vero;
ma che mi val, c'ho le membra legate?
S'io fossi pur di tanto ancor leggero
ch'i' potessi in cent' anni andare un'oncia,
io sarei messo già per lo sentiero,
cercando lui tra questa gente sconcia,
con tutto ch'ella volge undici miglia,
e men d'un mezzo di traverso non ci ha.
Io son per lor tra sì fatta famiglia;
e' m'indussero a batter li fiorini*

90 *ch'avevan tre carati di mondiglia».*
*E io a lui: «Chi son li due tapini
che fumman come man bagnate 'l verno,
giacendo stretti a' tuoi destri confini?».*
*«Qui li trovai—e poi volta non dierno—»,
rispuose, «quando piovvì in questo greppo,
e non credo che dieno in sempiterno.*

Are constantly before me—nor do they lack
Effect: their image parches me far worse
Than the face-wasting blight with which I'm sick.

The unbending Justice that wracks me thus makes use,
Fittingly, of the same place where I sinned,
To speed my sighs the quicker on their course:

70 There is Romena, where I falsely coined
The currency that bears the Baptist's face,
For which, on earth, I left my body burned—

But if I could behold, here in this place,
The miserable soul of Guido, or that
Of Alessandro, or set my eyes on his

Who is their brother, I would not trade the sight
For Fonte Branda! One is already inside—
If the raging shades who course the circle about

80 Have spoken truly. But since my limbs are tied,
What use is that to me? Were I still light
Enough to move even one inch ahead

Every hundred years, I would have set out
Upon the road already, trying to find
Him in this mutilated people—despite

The circuit being eleven miles around
And at least half a mile across its track.
It's because of them that I am in this kind

Of family: they persuaded me to make
Those florins that contained three carats of dross.”
90 I asked him, “Who are that pair of wretches who smoke

As wet hands do in winter, lying close
Next to your body on the right-hand side?”
“I found them here—they have not changed their place—

When I first fell like rain to this steep grade,
And I believe that neither will turn over
For all eternity. This false one made

L'una è la falsa ch'accusò Gioseppo;
 l'altr' è 'l falso Sinon greco di Troia:
 per febbre aguta gittan tanto leppo».

100 E l'un di lor, che si recò a noia
 forse d'esser nomato sì oscuro,
 col pugno li percosse l'epa croia.
 Quella sonò come fosse un tamburo;
 e mastro Adamo li percosse il volto
 col braccio suo, che non parve men duro,
 dicendo a lui: «Ancor che mi sia tolto
 lo muover per le membra che son gravi,
 ho io il braccio a tal mestiere sciolto».

110 Ond' ei rispuose: «Quando tu andavi
 al fuoco, non l'avei tu così presto;
 ma sì e più l'avei quando conavi».

E l'idropico: «Tu di' ver di questo:
 ma tu non fosti sì ver testimonio
 là 've del ver fosti a Troia richesto».

«S'io dissi falso, e tu falsasti il conio»,
 disse Sinon; «e son qui per un fallo,
 e tu per più ch'alcun altro demonio!».

«Ricorditi, spergiuro, del cavallo»,
 rispuose quel ch'avèa infiatà l'epa;
 120 «e sieti reo che tutto il mondo sallo!».

«E te sia rea la sete onde ti crepa»,
 disse 'l Greco, «la lingua, e l'acqua marcia
 che 'l ventre innanzi a li occhi sì t'assiepa!».

Allora il monetier: «Così si squarcia
 la bocca tua per tuo mal come suole:
 ché, s'i' ho sete e omor mi rinfarcia,
 tu hai l'arsura e 'l capo che ti duole,
 e per leccar lo specchio di Narcisso,
 non vorresti a 'nvitar molte parole».

Her accusation defaming Joseph; the other
Is the false Sinon, Trojan Greek," he responded.
"They reek so badly because of raging fever."

100 One of the pair—perhaps because offended
By such dark naming—made a fist and struck
Him on his rigid belly, which resounded

Just like a drum. And Master Adam paid back
That blow by striking his neighbor in the face
With an arm that was just as hard, and spoke:

"Though I am kept from moving by the mass
Of my too-heavy limbs, you can be sure
I have an arm kept free for such a case."

The other answered, "When you went to the fire
110 Your arm was not so ready—though indeed
For counterfeiting, it was ready, and more."

"Here you speak truth," the dropsied one replied.
"However, at Troy, when truth was their demand,
Your witness was not so true." "I falsified

In speech: you made false coinage," Sinon returned,
"And I am in this place for a single sin—
And you, for more than any other fiend."

"You perjurer, remember the horse again,"
The one who had the swollen paunch came back,
120 "And may the fact torment you: your role is known

By the whole world." "And torment," answered the Greek,
"To you—from thirst's tongue-cracking agonies,
And the foul waters that swell your belly to make

It rise up like a hedgerow blocking your eyes."
And then the counterfeiter answered, "Thus
Disease, as usual, spreads your gaping jaws;

For if I suffer thirst or feel distress
Engorged with humors, you burn, your head aches hard—
And you would lick Narcissus's looking glass

130 *Ad ascoltarli er' io del tutto fisso,
 quando 'l maestro mi disse: «Or pur mira,
 che per poco che teco non mi risso!».*
*Quand' io 'l senti' a me parlar con ira,
 volsimi verso lui con tal vergogna,
 ch'ancor per la memoria mi si gira.*
*Qual è colui che suo dannaggio sogna,
 che sognando desidera sognare,
 sì che quel ch'è, come non fosse, agogna,
 tal mi fec' io, non possendo parlare,*
 140 *che disiava scusarmi, e scusava
 me tuttavia, e nol mi credea fare.*
*«Maggior difetto men vergogna lava»,
 disse 'l maestro, «che 'l tuo non è stato;
 però d'ogne trestizia ti disgrava.*
*E fa ragion ch'io ti sia sempre allato,
 se più avvien che fortuna t'accoglia
 dove sien genti in simigliante piato:
 ché voler ciò udire è bassa voglia».*

130 Without delaying for too many a word
Of invitation, if you only could."
I listened to them intently—then I heard

My master: "Stare a little longer," he said,
"And I will quarrel with you!" When I heard him
Speaking to me in anger as he had,

I turned to him with such a feeling of shame
That it still circles through my memory.
As one who dreams he is harmed may in the dream

140 Wish that it were a dream—and therefore he
Longs for the thing that is, as if it were not:
So I, unable to speak, was yearning to say

Something to excuse myself—and by doing that
I did excuse myself, at the same time
As I was failing to do it in my thought.

"A greater fault would be cleansed by lesser shame
Than yours a moment ago," the master said.
"So let your sadness be disburdened: come—

Do not forget I am always at your side,
Should fortune bring you again to where you hear
150 People who are arguing as those two did:

Wanting to hear them is a low desire."

- Una medesima lingua pria mi morse,
 sì che mi tinse l'una e l'altra guancia,
 e poi la medicina mi riporse;
 così od' io che solea far la lancia
 d'Achille e del suo padre esser cagione
 prima di trista e poi di buona mancia.
 Noi demmo il dosso al misero vallone
 su per la ripa che 'l cinge dintorno,
 attraversando senza alcun sermone.*
- 10 *Quiv' era men che notte e men che giorno,
 sì che 'l viso m'andava innanzi poco;
 ma io senti' sonare un alto corno,
 tanto ch'avrebbe ogne tuon fatto fioco,
 che, contra sé la sua via seguitando,
 dirizzò li occhi miei tutti ad un loco.
 Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
 Carlo Magno perdé la santa gesta,
 non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.*
- 20 *Poco portäi in là volta la testa,
 che me parve veder molte alte torri;
 ond' io: «Maestro, dì, che terra è questa?».
 Ed elli a me: «Però che tu trascorri
 per le tenebre troppo da la lungi,
 avvien che poi nel maginare abborri.
 Tu vedrai ben, se tu là ti congiungi,
 quanto 'l senso s'inganna di lontano;
 però alquanto più te stesso pungi».*
- 30 *Poi caramente mi prese per mano
 e disse: «Pria che noi siam più avanti,
 acciò che 'l fatto men ti paia strano,
 sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,
 e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa
 da l'umbilico in giuso tutti quanti».*

CANTO XXXI

One and the same tongue made me feel its sting,
Tinting one cheek and the other, then supplied
Balm: so I've heard Achilles' lance could bring

(The one his father gave him) first harm, then good.
We turned our backs upon that valley of woes
And climbed its girdling bank to the other side,

Crossing in silence. Here it was something less
Than night and less than day, so that my vision
Reached only a little way ahead of us;

10 But I could hear a horn blast—its concussion
So loud it would make a thunderclap seem faint;
And the sound guided my eyes in its direction

Back to one place, where all my attention went.
After the dolorous rout, when Charlemagne
Had lost his holy army and Roland sent

The signal from his horn, it must have been
Less terrible a sound. Before my head
Was turned that way for long, I saw a line

Of what seemed lofty towers. Then I said,
20 "Master, what city is this?" "Because you peer
Into the dark from far off," he replied,

"Your imagination goes astray. Once there,
You will see plainly how distance can deceive
The senses—so spur yourself a little more."

And then he took me by the hand, with love,
Saying, "Before we go much farther along,
Learn now, in order that the fact may prove

Less strange: these are not towers but a ring
Of giants—each one standing in the pit
30 Up to the navel." As mist is vanishing,

Come quando la nebbia si dissipa,
 lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
 ciò che cela 'l vapor che l'aere stipa,
 così forando l'aura grossa e scura,
 più e più appressando ver' la sponda,
 fuggiemi errore e cresciemi paura;
 40 però che, come su la cerchia tonda
 Montereccion di torri si corona,
 così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda
 torreggiavan di mezza la persona
 li orribili giganti, cui minaccia
 Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona.
 E io scorgeva già d'alcun la faccia,
 le spalle e 'l petto e del ventre gran parte,
 e per le coste giù ambo le braccia.
 Natura certo, quando lasciò l'arte
 50 di sì fatti animali, assai fé bene
 per tòrre tali esecutori a Marte.
 E s'ella d'elefanti e di balene
 non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente,
 più giusta e più discreta la ne tene;
 ché dove l'argomento de la mente
 s'aggiugne al mal volere e a la possa,
 nessun riparo vi può far la gente.
 La faccia sua mi pareva lunga e grossa
 come la pina di San Pietro a Roma,
 60 e a sua proporzione eran l'altre ossa;
 sì che la ripa, ch'era perizoma
 dal mezzo in giù, ne mostrava ben tanto
 di sovra, che di giugnere a la chioma
 tre Frison s'averien dato mal vanto;
 però ch'i' ne vedea trenta gran palmi
 dal loco in giù dov' omo affibbia 'l manto.

Little by little vision starts picking out
Shapes that were hidden in the misty air:
Just so, as I began to penetrate

Into that thick and murky atmosphere,
Fear gathered in me as my error fled—
For, as on Monteregione's wall appear

Towers that crown its circle, here, arrayed
All round the bank encompassing the pit
With half their bulk like towers above it, stood

40 Horrible giants, whom Jove still rumbles at
With menace when he thunders. I descried
The face of one already, and the set

Of his great chest and shoulders, and a wide
Stretch of his belly above the abyss's walls,
And the arms along his sides. (Nature indeed,

When she abandoned making these animals,
Did well to keep such instruments from Mars;
Though she does not repent of making whales

Or elephants, a person who subtly inquires
50 Into her ways will find her both discreet
And just, in her decision: if one confers

The power of the mind, along with that
Of immense strength, upon an evil will
Then people will have no defense from it.)

To me his face appeared as long and full
As the bronze pinecone of St. Peter's at Rome,
With all his other bones proportional,

So that the bank, which was an apron for him
Down from his middle, showed above it such height
60 Three men of Friesland could not boast to come

Up to his hair. Extending down from the spot
Where one would buckle a mantle I could see
Thirty spans of him. The fierce mouth started to shout,

- «Raphèl mai amècche zabì almi»,
cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca,
cui non si convenia più dolci salmi.
- 70 E 'l duca mio ver' lui: «Anima sciocca,
tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfoga
quand' ira o altra passion ti tocca!
Cércati al collo, e troverai la soga
che 'l tien legato, o anima confusa,
e vedi lui che 'l gran petto ti dogà».
- Poi disse a me: «Elli stessi s'accusa;
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal coto
pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s'usa.
Lasciànto stare e non parliamo a vòto;
- 80 ché così è a lui ciascun linguaggio
come 'l suo ad altrui, ch'a nullo è noto».
- Facemmo adunque più lungo vïaggio,
vòlti a sinistra; e al trar d'un balestro
trovammo l'altro assai più fero e maggio.
- A cigner lui qual che fosse 'l maestro,
non so io dir, ma el tenea soccinto
dinanzi l'altro e dietro il braccio destro
d'una catena che 'l tenea avvinto
dal collo in giù, sì che 'n su lo scoperto
- 90 si r avvolgëa infino al giro quinto.
- «Questo superbo volle esser esperto
di sua potenza contra 'l sommo Giove»,
disse 'l mio duca, «ond' elli ha cotal merto.
Fïalte ha nome, e fece le gran prove
quando i giganti fer paura a' dèi;
le braccia ch'el menò, già mai non move».
- E io a lui: «S'esser puote, io vorrei
che de lo smisurato Briareo
esperienza avesser li occhi miei».

"Raphèl mai amècche zabì almi"—

Sweeter psalms would not fit it—and then my guide
Addressed him: "Soul, in your stupidity

Keep to your horn, and when you have the need
Use that to vent your rage or other passion;
Search at your neck the strap where it is tied,

70 And try to see it, O spirit in confusion,
Aslant your own great chest." Having said that,
He told me, "This is Nimrod: his accusation

He himself makes; for through his evil thought
There is no common language the world can use:
Leave him alone then, rather than speak for naught—

For every language is to him as his
Is to all others: no one fathoms it."
So, turning left, we quit that giant's place,

And at the distance of a crossbow's shot
80 Another, fiercer and greater, is what we found:
What master could have fettered him like that

I do not know, but his right arm was chained
Behind him and the other arm before,
Clasped by a chain that also held him bound

From the neck down, so that it was wound as far
As the fifth coil on the part of him that showed.
"This proud one had a wish to test his power

Against supreme Jove: this is how he is paid,"
My guide said. "Ephialtes is his name;
90 And when the giants made the gods afraid

Awesome endeavors were put forth by him.
He cannot move these arms he strove with once."
I said, "If it's possible for me to come

To where my eyes might have experience
Of immense Briareus, I wish I could."
"Antaeus, whom you'll see some distance hence,

- 100 Ond' ei rispuose: «Tu vedrai Anteo
presso di qui che parla ed è disciolto,
che ne porrà nel fondo d'ogne reo.
Quel che tu vuo' veder, più là è molto
ed è legato e fatto come questo,
salvo che più feroce par nel volto».
Non fu tremoto già tanto rubesto,
che scotesse una torre così forte,
come Fialte a scuotersi fu presto.
Allor temett' io più che mai la morte,
110 e non v'era mestier più che la dotta,
s'io non avessi viste le ritorte.
Noi procedemmo più avanti allotta,
e venimmo ad Anteo, che ben cinque alle,
sanza la testa, uscìa fuor de la grotta.
«O tu che ne la fortunata valle
che fece Scipion di gloria reda,
quand' Anibàl co' suoi diede le spalle,
recasti già mille leon per preda,
e che, se fossi stato a l'alta guerra
120 de' tuoi fratelli, ancor par che si creda
ch'avrebber vinto i figli de la terra:
mettine giù, e non ten vegna schifo,
dove Cocito la freddura serra.
Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo:
questi può dar di quel che qui si brama;
però ti china e non torcer lo grifo.
Ancor ti può nel mondo render fama,
ch'el vive, e lunga vita ancor aspetta
se 'nnanzi tempo grazia a sé nol chiama».
130 Così disse 'l maestro; e quelli in fretta
le man distese, e prese 'l duca mio,
ond' Ercule sentì già grande stretta.

Can speak, and is unchained as well," he said;
"He will convey us to sin's profoundest abyss.
The one you wish to see is farther ahead,

100 And he is bound and fashioned as this one is,
Though somewhat more ferocious in his look."
No tower was ever shaken by the throes

Of a great earthquake as Ephialtes shook
Himself at hearing this. As never before
I was afraid of dying, and wouldn't lack

A cause of death beyond that very fear,
Had I not seen his fetters. Then we went on
And reached Antaeus—who rose five ells or more,

Not reckoning his head, above the stone.
110 "O you, who—in that fateful valley that made
Scipio inheritor of glory when

Hannibal along with all his followers fled
Showing his back—once garnered as your prey
A thousand lions: you through whom, it is said

By some, your brothers might have carried the day
In their high war, if you had been there then
Among the sons of earth in battle: pray,

Now set us down below—do not disdain
To do so—where Cocytus is locked in cold.
120 Do not compel us to seek some other one

Like Typhon or Tityus. This man can yield
The thing that's longed for here; therefore bend down
And do not curl your lip. He can rebuild

Your fame on earth—he lives, and living on
Longer is his expectation, if grace does not
Summon him to itself untimely soon."

So spoke my master; and the giant stretched out
In haste those hands whose grip clasped Hercules,
And took my leader. Virgil, when he felt that,

Virgilio, quando prender si sentio,
disse a me: «Fatti qua, sì ch'io ti prenda»;
poi fece sì ch'un fascio era elli e io.
Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda
sotto 'l chinato, quando un nuvol vada
sovr' essa sì, ched ella incontro penda:
tal parve Antëo a me che stava a bada
di vederlo chinare, e fu tal ora
140 ch'i' avrei voluto ir per altra strada.
Ma lievemente al fondo che divora
Lucifero con Giuda, ci sposò;
né, sì chinato, li fece dimora,
e come albero in nave si levò.

130 Said to me, "Now come here, that I may seize
Good hold of you," and of himself and me
He made one bundle. As seems to one who sees

The leaning tower at Garisenda, when he
Is under the leaning side, and when a cloud
Is passing over going the other way

From how the tower inclines, so in my dread
Antaeus seemed to me as I watched him lean—
That moment, I would have wished for another road!

140 But having stooped he set us gently upon
That bottom Lucifer is swallowed in
Along with Judas; nor did he stay bent down,

But like a ship's mast raised himself again.

- S'io avessi le rime aspre e chiocce,
 come si converrebbe al tristo buco
 sovra 'l qual pontan tutte l'altre rocce,
 io premerei di mio concetto il suco
 più pienamente; ma perch' io non l'abbo,
 non senza tema a dicer mi conduco;
 ché non è impresa da pigliare a gabbo
 discriver fondo a tutto l'universo,
 né da lingua che chiami mamma o babbo.*
- 10 *Ma quelle donne aiutino il mio verso
 ch'aiutaro Anfione a chiuder Tebe,
 sì che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso.
 Oh sovra tutte mal creata plebe
 che stai nel loco onde parlare è duro,
 mei foste state qui pecore o zebe!
 Come noi fummo giù nel pozzo scuro
 sotto i piè del gigante assai più bassi,
 e io mirava ancora a l'alto muro,
 dicere udi'mi: «Guarda come passi:*
- 20 *va sì, che tu non calchi con le piante
 le teste de' fratei miseri lassi».*
*Per ch'io mi volsi, e vidimi davante
 e sotto i piedi un lago che per gelo
 avea di vetro e non d'acqua sembiente.
 Non fece al corso suo sì grosso velo
 di verno la Danoia in Osterlicchi,
 né Tanaï là sotto 'l freddo cielo,
 com' era quivi; che se Tambernichchi
 vi fosse sù caduto, o Pietrapana,*
- 30 *non avria pur da l'orlo fatto cricchi.
 E come a gracidar si sta la rana
 col muso fuor de l'acqua, quando sogna
 di spigolar sovente la villana,*

CANTO XXXII

If I had harsh and grating rhymes, to befit
That melancholy hole which is the place
All the other rocks converge and thrust their weight,

Then I could more completely press the juice
From my conception. But since I lack such lines,
I feel afraid as I come to speak of this:

It is not jokingly that one begins
To describe the bottom of the universe—
Not a task suited for a tongue that whines

10 *Mamma and Dadda.* May the muses help my verse
As when they helped Amphion wall Thebes, so that
Word not diverge from fact as it takes its course.

O horde, beyond all others ill-begot,
Who dwell in that place so hard to speak about:
Better for you to be born a sheep or goat!

When we were deep in the darkness of the pit
Beneath the giant's feet, much farther down,
And I still gazed back up the high wall of it:

20 "Watch how you step," I heard a voice intone,
"Be careful that you do not set your feet
On the weary, wretched brothers' heads." Whereon

I turned, and saw before me and underfoot
A lake that ice made less like water than glass;
In Austria, never has the Danube set

So thick a veil above its current as this,
Nor, under its cold sky, has the far-off Don:
Had Mount Tambernic fallen to strike that ice,

Or Pietrapana, it would not even then
Creak, even at its edge. As the frog lies
30 Snout above water to croak in the season when

livide, insin là dove appar vergogna
 eran l'ombre dolenti ne la ghiaccia,
 mettendo i denti in nota di cicogna.
 Ognuna in giù tenea volta la faccia;
 da bocca il freddo, e da li occhi il cor tristo
 tra lor testimonianza si procaccia.
 40 Quand' io m'ebbi dintorno alquanto visto,
 volsimi a' piedi, e vidi due sì stretti,
 che 'l pel del capo avieno insieme misto.
 «Ditemi, voi che sì strignete i petti»,
 diss' io, «chi siete?». E quei piegaro i colli;
 e poi ch'ebber li visi a me eretti,
 li occhi lor, ch'eran pria pur dentro molli,
 gocciar su per le labbra, e 'l gelo strinse
 le lagrime tra essi e riserrolli.
 Con legno legno spranga mai non cinse
 50 forte così; ond' ei come due becchi
 cozzaro insieme, tanta ira li vinse.
 E un ch'avea perduti ambo li orecchi
 per la freddura, pur col viso in giùe,
 disse: «Perché cotanto in noi ti specchi?
 Se vuoi saper chi son cotesti due,
 la valle onde Bisenzo si dichina
 del padre loro Alberto e di lor fue.
 D'un corpo usciro; e tutta la Caina
 potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra
 60 degna più d'esser fitta in gelatina:
 non quelli a cui fu rotto il petto e l'ombra
 con esso un colpo per la man d'Artù;
 non Focaccia; non questi che m'ingombra
 col capo sì, ch'i' non veggio oltre più,
 e fu nomato Sassol Mascheroni;
 se tosco se', ben sai omai chi fu.

The peasant woman often has reveries
Of gleaning, spirits—livid to where the cheeks
Turn color with shame—were locked inside the ice,

Teeth chattering the note a stork's beak makes.
Each held his face turned down; they testified
Cold by their mouths, and misery by the looks

Their eyes bore. After a time while I surveyed
The scene around me, I glanced down at my feet,
And saw two shades there packed in head to head

40 So tightly that their hair was interknit.
"O you whose breasts are pressed together," I said,
"Who are you?" They bent back their necks at that,

And having raised their faces to me, they shed
Tears, welling now from eyes already moist
To flow down over their lips, where the frost glued

Each to the other, ever more tightly fused:
Iron clamps never held beam to beam so fast—
And like two goats, each butted the one he faced

In a helpless rage. Another, who had lost
50 Both ears to frost, spoke with his face still down:
"Why stare at us so long? If you insist

On knowing who these two are, the valley wherein
Bisenzio's stream begins its long descent
Once was their father Albert's and their own.

They issued from one body, and if you went
All over Caina you could not find a shade
Worthier to be frozen in punishment:

Not him whose breast and shadow the impaling blade
In Arthur's hand pierced with one stroke; nor him
60 They called Focaccia; nor this other whose head

So blocks me I can see no farther: his name,
Sassol Mascheroni, is one you recognize
If you are Tuscan. And—so you need not claim

E perché non mi metti in più sermoni,
 sappi ch'ì fu' il Camiscion de' Pazzi;
 e aspetto Carlin che mi scagioni».

70 Poscia vid' io mille visi cagnazzi
 fatti per freddo; onde mi vien riprezzo,
 e verrà sempre, de' gelati guazzi.
 E mentre ch'andavamo inver' lo mezzo
 al quale ogne gravezza si rauna,
 e io tremava ne l'eterno rezzo;
 se voler fu o destino o fortuna,
 non so; ma, passeggiando tra le teste,
 forte percossi 'l piè nel viso ad una.
 Piangendo mi sgridò: «Perché mi peste?
 80 se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
 di Montaperti, perché mi moleste?».
 E io: «Maestro mio, or qui m'aspetta,
 sì ch'io esca d'un dubbio per costui;
 poi mi farai, quantunque vorrai, fretta».
 Lo duca stette, e io dissi a colui
 che bestemmiava duramente ancora:
 «Qual se' tu che così rampogni altrui?».
 «Or tu chi se' che vai per l'Antenora,
 percotendo», rispuose, «altrui le gote,
 90 sì che, se fossi vivo, troppo fora?».
 «Vivo son io, e caro esser ti puote»,
 fu mia risposta, «se dimandi fama,
 ch'io metta il nome tuo tra l'altre note».
 Ed elli a me: «Del contrario ho io brama.
 Lèvati quinci e non mi dar più lagna,
 ché mal sai lusingar per questa lama!».

Any more speech of me—my own name was
Camiscion de' Pazzi and this is where I await
Carlino's coming to make my sin seem less."

I saw a thousand faces after that,
All purple as a dog's lips from the frost:
I still shiver, and always will, at the sight

70 Of a frozen pond. All through the time we progressed
Toward the core where all gravity convenes,
I quaked in that eternal chill; and next—

I don't know whether by will or fate or chance—
Walking among the heads I struck my foot
Hard in the face of one, with violence

That set him weeping as he shouted out,
"Why trample me? And if you have not come
To add more vengeance for Montaperti's defeat,

80 Then why do you molest me?" I turned from him;
"Master," I said, "I pray you: wait for me here
While I resolve a doubt concerning his name;

Then you shall hurry me on as you desire."
My leader stopped, and I addressed the shade
Who was still cursing as bitterly as before:

"And who are you who reviles another?" I said.
"Nay, who are you," he answered, "who thus contrive
To go through Antenora striking the head

90 And cheeks of others—which even were you alive
Would be too much." "Alive is what I am,"
I told him, "and if fame is what you crave,

Then you might value having me note your name
Among the others." He answered, "What I desire
Is quite the opposite—get you gone, and come

To trouble me no more, inept as you are,
Not knowing how to flatter at this great depth."
Then I reached out and seized him by the hair

Allor lo presi per la cuticagna
 e dissi: «El converrà che tu ti nomi,
 o che capel qui sù non ti rimagna».

100 Ond' elli a me: «Perché tu mi dischiomi,
 né ti dirò ch'io sia, né mosterrolti
 se mille fiate in sul capo mi tomi».

Io avea già i capelli in mano avvolti,
 e tratti glien' avea più d'una ciocca,
 latrando lui con li occhi in giù raccolti,
 quando un altro gridò: «Che hai tu, Bocca?
 non ti basta sonar con le mascelle,
 se tu non latri? qual diavol ti tocca?».

«Omai», diss' io, «non vo' che tu favelle,
 110 malvagio traditor; ch'a la tua onta
 io porterò di te vere novelle».

«Va via», rispuose, «e ciò che tu vuoi conta;
 ma non tacer, se tu di qua entro eschi,
 di quel ch'ebbe or così la lingua pronta.
 El piange qui l'argento de' Franceschi:
 "Io vidi", potrai dir, "quel da Duera
 là dove i peccatori stanno freschi".

Se fossi domandato altri chi v'era,
 tu hai dallato quel di Beccheria
 120 di cui segò Fiorenza la gorgiera.
 Gianni de' Soldanier credo che sia
 più là con Ganellone e Tebaldello,
 ch'apri Faenza quando si dormia».

Noi eravam partiti già da ello,
 ch'io vidi due ghiacciati in una buca,
 sì che l'un capo a l'altro era cappello;
 e come 'l pan per fame si manduca,
 così 'l sovràn li denti a l'altro pose
 là 've 'l cervel s'aggiugne con la nuca:

And shook his scruff. "Now name yourself forthwith—
Or not a hair will remain," I threatened him.
He answered, "Though you pluck me bald in your wrath,

100 I will not tell you nor show you who I am,
Not if you fall a thousand times on my pate."
Already I had twisted round my palm

A length of hair, and pulled some clumps right out,
And he was barking, with his eyes held down,
When a new voice called: "Bocca, what is it—

What ails you? Are you so weary of the tune
Your jaws create that now you are barking, too?
What devil is at you?" "Now," said I, "I am done:

I have no further need to speak with you,
110 Accursed traitor, for now, to your disgrace,
I will report about you what is true."

"Then go away," he answered, "tell what you choose—
But don't be silent, if you do get out,
About that one so quick just now to use

His tongue. Here he laments the silver he got
From Frenchmen's hands. 'I saw him,' you can declare,
'The man of Duera, down where the sinners are put

To cool.' And if they ask who else was there,
The man of Beccheria is at your side,
120 Whose gullet was slit by Florence. Also here,

A little farther along your way, reside
Gianni de' Soldanieri with Ganelon
And Tebaldello who opened Faenza wide

While it was asleep." We had left him, moving on,
When I saw two shades frozen in a single hole—
Packed so close, one head hooded the other one;

The way the starving devour their bread, the soul
Above had clenched the other with his teeth
Where the brain meets the nape. And at the skull

130 non altrimenti Tidëo si rose
le tempie a Menalippo per disdegno,
che quei faceva il teschio e l'altre cose.
«O tu che mostri per sì bestial segno
odio sovra colui che tu ti mangi,
dimmi 'l perché», diss' io, «per tal convegno,
che se tu a ragion di lui ti piangi,
sappiendo chi voi siete e la sua pecca,
nel mondo suso ancora io te ne cangi,
se quella con ch'io parlo non si secca».

150 And other parts, as Tydeus berserk with wrath
Gnawed at the head of Menalippus, he chewed.
“You, showing such bestial hatred for him beneath,

Whom you devour: tell me your reason,” I cried,
“And, on condition that your grievance is right,
Knowing both who you are and what wrong deed

This one committed against you, I may yet
Repay you for whatever you may say,
Up in the world above—by telling it,

If that with which I speak does not go dry.”

- La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto
 quel peccator, forbendola a' capelli
 del capo ch'elli avea di retro guasto.
 Poi cominciò: «Tu vuo' ch'io rinovelli
 disperato dolor che 'l cor mi preme
 già pur pensando, pria ch'io ne favelli.
 Ma se le mie parole esser dien seme
 che frutti infamia al traditor ch'i' rodo,
 parlare e lagrimar vedrai insieme.
- 10 Io non so chi tu se' né per che modo
 venuto se' qua giù; ma fiorentino
 mi sembri veramente quand' io t'odo.
 Tu dei saper ch'i' fui conte Ugolino,
 e questi è l'arcivescovo Ruggieri:
 or ti dirò perché i son tal vicino.
 Che per l'effetto de' suo' mai pensieri,
 fidandomi di lui, io fossi preso
 e poscia morto, dir non è mestieri;
 però quel che non puoi avere inteso,
- 20 cioè come la morte mia fu cruda,
 udirai, e saprai s'e' m'ha offeso.
 Breve pertugio dentro da la Muda,
 la qual per me ha 'l titol de la fame,
 e che conviene ancor ch'altrui si chiuda,
 m'avea mostrato per lo suo forame
 più lune già, quand' io feci 'l mal sonno
 che del futuro mi squarciò 'l velame.
 Questi pareva a me maestro e donno,
 cacciando il lupo e ' lupicini al monte
- 30 per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno.
 Con cagne magre, studiose e conte
 Gualandi con Sismondi e con Lanfranchi
 s'avea messi dinanzi da la fronte.

CANTO XXXIII

Pausing in his savage meal, the sinner raised
His mouth and wiped it clean along the hair
Left on the head whose back he had laid waste.

Then he began: "You ask me to endure
Reliving a grief so desperate, the thought
Torments my heart even as I prepare

To tell it. But if my words are seeds, with fruit
Of infamy for this traitor that I gnaw,
I will both speak and weep within your sight.

10 I don't know who you are that come here, or how,
But you are surely Florentine to my ear.
I was Count Ugolino, you must know:

This is Archbishop Ruggieri. You will hear
Why I am such a neighbor to him as this:
How, through my trust and his devices, I bore

First being taken, then killed, no need to trace;
But things which you cannot have heard about—
The manner of my death, how cruel it was—

I shall describe, and you can tell from that
20 If he has wronged me. A slit in the Tower Mew
(Called Hunger's Tower after me, where yet

Others will be closed up) had let me view
Several moons already, when my bad dream
Came to me, piercing the future's veil right through:

This man appeared as lord of the hunt; he came
Chasing a wolf and whelps, on that high slope
That blocks the Pisans' view of Lucca. With him

His lean hounds ran, well trained and eager; his troop—
Gualandi, Sismondi, Lanfranchi—had been sent
30 To ride in front of him. With no escape,

*In picciol corso mi parieno stanchi
 lo padre e ' figli, e con l'agute scane
 mi pareva lor veder fender li fianchi.
 Quando fui desto innanzi la dimane,
 pianger senti' fra 'l sonno i miei figliuoli
 ch'eran con meco, e dimandar del pane.*

40 *Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
 pensando ciò che 'l mio cor s'annunziava;
 e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?*

*Già eran desti, e l'ora s'appressava
 che 'l cibo ne solëa essere addotto,
 e per suo sogno ciascun dubitava;
 e io senti' chiavar l'uscio di sotto
 a l'orribile torre' ond' io guardai
 nel viso a' mie' figliuoi senza far motto.
 Io non piangëa, sì dentro impetrai:*

50 *piangevan elli; e Anselmuccio mio
 disse: "Tu guardi sì, padre! che hai?"*

*Perciò non lagrimai né rispuos' io
 tutto quel giorno né la notte appresso,
 infìn che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìo.
 Come un poco di raggio si fu messo
 nel doloroso carcere, e io scorsi
 per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso,
 ambo le man per lo dolor mi morsi;
 ed ei, pensando ch'io 'l fessi per voglia
 di manicar, di subito levorsi*

60 *e disser: "Padre, assai ci fia men doglia
 se tu mangi di noi: tu ne vestisti
 queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia".
 Queta'mi allor per non farli più tristi;
 lo dì e l'altro stemmo tutti muti;
 ahi dura terra, perché non t'apristi?*

After a short run, father and sons seemed spent;
I saw their flanks, that sharp fangs seemed to tear.
I woke before dawn, hearing the complaint

Of my own children, who were with me there,
Whimpering in their sleep and asking for bread.
You grieve already, or truly cruel you are,

As you think of what my heart began to dread—
And if not now, then when do you shed a tear?
They were awake now, with the hour when food

40 Was usually brought us drawing near,
And each one apprehensive from his dream.
And then I heard them nailing shut the door

Into that fearful tower—a pounding that came
From far below. Hearing that noise, I stared
Into my children's faces, not speaking to them.

Inside me I was turned to stone, so hard
I could not weep; the children wept. And my
Little Anselmo, peering at me, inquired:

50 'Father, what ails you?' And still I did not cry,
Nor did I answer, all that day and night
Until the next sun dawned. When one small ray

Found its way into our prison, and I made out
In their four faces the image of my own,
I bit my hands for grief; when they saw that,

They thought I did it from my hunger's pain,
And suddenly rose. 'Father: our pain,' they said,
'Will lessen if you eat us—you are the one

Who clothed us in this wretched flesh: we plead
For you to be the one who strips it away.'
60 I calmed myself to grieve them less. We stayed

Silent through that and then the following day.
O you hard earth, why didn't you open then?
When we had reached the fourth day, Gaddo lay

- Poscia che fummo al quarto dì venuti,
 Gaddo mi sì gittò disteso a' piedi,
 dicendo: "Padre mio, ché non m'aiuti?".
- 70 Quivi morì; e come tu mi vedi,
 vid' io cascar li tre ad uno ad uno
 tra 'l quinto dì e 'l sesto; ond' io mi diedi,
 già cieco, a brancolar sovra ciascuno,
 e due dì li chiamai, poi che fur morti.
 Poscia, più che 'l dolor, poté 'l digiuno».
- Quand' ebbe detto ciò, con li occhi torti
 riprese 'l teschio misero co' denti,
 che furo a l'osso, come d'un can, forti.
- Ahi Pisa, vituperio de le genti
- 80 del bel paese là dove 'l sì suona,
 poi che i vicini a te punir son lenti,
 muovasi la Capraia e la Gorgona,
 e faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce,
 sì ch'elli annieghi in te ogne persona!
 Che se 'l conte Ugolino aveva voce
 d'aver tradita te de le castella,
 non dovei tu i figliuoi porre a tal croce.
- Innocenti facea l'età novella,
 novella Tebe, Uguiccone e 'l Brigata
- 90 e li altri due che 'l canto suso appella.
 Noi passammo oltre, là 've la gelata
 ruvidamente un'altra gente fascia,
 non volta in giù, ma tutta riversata.
 Lo pianto stesso li pianger non lascia,
 e 'l duol che truova in su li occhi rintoppo,
 si volge in entro a far crescer l'ambascia;
 ché le lagrime prime fanno groppo,
 e sì come visiere di cristallo,
 riempion sotto 'l ciglio tutto il coppo.
- 100 E avvegna che, sì come d'un callo,
 per la freddura ciascun sentimento
 cessato avesse del mio viso stallo,

Stretched at my feet where he had fallen down:
‘Father, why don’t you help me?’ he said, and died.
And surely as you see me, so one by one

I watched the others fall till all were dead,
Between the fifth day and the sixth. And I,
Already going blind, groped over my brood—

70 Calling to them, though I had watched them die,
For two long days. And then the hunger had more
Power than even sorrow had over me.”

When he had finished, with a sideways stare
He gripped the skull again in his teeth, which ground
Strong as a dog’s against the bone he tore.

Ah, Pisa! You shame the peoples of the fair land
Where *si* is spoken: slow as your neighbors are
To punish you, may Gorgona shift its ground,

And Capraia, till those islands make a bar
80 To dam the Arno, and drown your populace—
Every soul in you! Though Ugolino bore

The fame of having betrayed your fortresses,
Still it was wrong in you to so torment
His helpless children. You Thebes of latter days,

Their youthful ages made them innocent!—
Uguccione, Brigata, and the two
My song has named already. On we went,

To where frost roughly swathes a people who,
Instead of downward, turn their faces up.
90 There, weeping keeps them from weeping—for as they do,

Grief finds a barrier where the eyes would weep
But forced back inward, adds to their agonies:
A crystal visor of prior tears fills the cup

Below the eyebrow with a knot of ice.
And though, as when a callus has grown numb,
The cold had sucked all feeling from my face

già mi pareva sentire alquanto vento;
 per ch'io: «Maestro mio, questo chi move?
 non è qua giù ogni vapore spento?».
 Ond' elli a me: «Avaccio sarai dove
 di ciò ti farà l'occhio la risposta,
 veggendo la cagion che 'l fiato piove».
 E un de' tristi de la fredda crosta
 110 gridò a noi: «O anime crudeli
 tanto che data v'è l'ultima posta,
 levatemi dal viso i duri veli,
 sì ch'io sfoghi 'l duol che 'l cor m'impregna,
 un poco, pria che 'l pianto si raggeli».
 Per ch'io a lui: «Se vuo' ch'i' ti sovvegna,
 dimmi chi se', e s'io non ti disbrigo,
 al fondo de la ghiaccia ir mi convegno».
 Rispuose adunque: «I' son frate Alberigo;
 i' son quel da le frutta del mal orto,
 120 che qui riprendo dattero per figo».
 «Oh», diss' io lui, «or se' tu ancor morto?».
 Ed elli a me: «Come 'l mio corpo stea
 nel mondo sù, nulla scienza porto.
 Cotal vantaggio ha questa Tolomea,
 che spesse volte l'anima ci cade
 innanzi ch'Atropòs mossa le dea.
 E perché tu più volontier mi rade
 le 'nvetriate lagrime dal volto,
 sappie che, tosto che l'anima trade
 130 come fec' io, il corpo suo l'è tolto
 da un demonio, che poscia il governa
 mentre che 'l tempo suo tutto sia vòlto.
 Ella ruina in sì fatta cisterna;
 e forse pare ancor lo corpo suso
 de l'ombra che di qua dietro mi verna.

I sensed a wind, and wondered from where it came:
“Master, who moves this? Is it not the case
All vapors are extinguished in this realm?”

100 “Soon,” he responded, “you will reach a place
Where your own eyes—beholding what source this blast
Is poured by from above—will answer this.”

And then one wretch encased in the frozen crust
Cried out to us, “O souls so cruel that here,
Of all the stations, you’re assigned the last—

Lift the hard veils away from my face, I implore,
So that before the weeping freezes again
I can release a little of this despair

And misery that swell my heart.” Whereon
110 I said, “If you would have me help you, disclose
To me who you are: if I don’t help you then,

May I be sent to the bottom of the ice.”
He answered, “I am Fra Alberigo, the man
Of fruit from the evil garden; in this place

I get my payment, date for fig.” “Oh then,”
I said to him, “you are already dead?”
“I do not know what state my body is in,

Nor how it fares in the world above,” he said.
“For Ptolomea’s privilege is this:
120 Down to this place a soul is often conveyed

Before it is sent forth by Atropos.
So that you may more willingly scrape the cowl
Of tears made hard as glass that coats my face,

Know that as soon as a soul commits betrayal
The way I did, a devil displaces it
And governs inside the body until its toll

Of years elapses. Meanwhile, down to this vat
The soul falls headlong—so it could be true
That this shade, wintering here behind me, yet

*Tu 'l dei saper, se tu vien pur mo giuso:
elli è ser Branca Doria, e son più anni
poscia passati ch'el fu sì racchiuso».*

140 *«Io credo», diss' io lui, «che tu m'inganni;
ché Branca Doria non morì unquanche,
e mangia e bee e dorme e veste panni».*

*«Nel fosso sù», diss' el, «de' Malebranche,
là dove bolle la tenace pece,
non era ancora giunto Michel Zanche,
che questi lasciò il diavolo in sua vece
nel corpo suo, ed un suo prossimano
che 'l tradimento insieme con lui fece.*

*Ma distendi oggimai in qua la mano;
aprimi li occhi». E io non gliel' apersi;
e cortesia fu lui esser villano.*

150 *Ahi Genovesi, uomini diversi
d'ogne costume e pien d'ogne magagna,
perché non siete voi del mondo spersi?*

*Ché col peggiore spirto di Romagna
trovai di voi un tal, che per sua opra
in anima in Cocito già si bagna,
e in corpo par vivo ancor di sopra.*

130 Appears above on earth too: you must know,
 If you were sent down only a short time past.
 He is Ser Branca d'Oria; it's years ago

 He first arrived here to be thus encased."
 "Now you deceive me, for I am one who knows
 That Branca d'Oria is not deceased:

 He eats and drinks and sleeps and puts on clothes,"
 I told him. And he answered, "In the ditch
 Ruled by the Malebranche above, that seethes

 And bubbles with the lake of clinging pitch,
 140 The shade of Michel Zanche had not arrived
 When this, his killer, had a devil encroach

 His body (as did his kinsman, when they contrived
 Together to perform their treachery)
 And take his place in it. Now, as I craved,

 Reach out your hand and open my eyes for me."
 I did not open them—for to be rude
 To such a one as him was courtesy.

 Ah Genoese!—to every accustomed good,
 Strangers; with every corruption, amply crowned:
 150 Why hasn't the world expunged you as it should?

 For with Romagna's worst spirit I have found
 One of you—already, for deeds he was guilty of,
 Bathed in Cocytus: in soul now underground

 Who in body still appears alive, above.

- «Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni
 verso di noi; però dinanzi mira»,
 disse 'l maestro mio, «se tu 'l discerni».
- Come quando una grossa nebbia spira,
 o quando l'emisperio nostro annotta,
 par di lungi un molin che 'l vento gira,
 veder mi parve un tal dificio allotta;
 poi per lo vento mi ristringsi retro
 al duca mio, ché non li era altra grotta.
- 10 Già era, e con paura il metto in metro,
 là dove l'ombre tutte eran coperte,
 e trasparen come festuca in vetro.
- Altre sono a giacere; altre stanno erte,
 quella col capo e quella con le piante;
 altra, com' arco, il volto a' piè rinverte.
- Quando noi fummo fatti tanto avante,
 ch'al mio maestro piacque di mostrarmi
 la creatura ch'ebbe il bel sembiante,
 d'innanzi mi si tolse e fé restarmi,
- 20 «Ecco Dite», dicendo, «ed ecco il loco
 ove convien che di fortezza t'armi».
- Com' io divenni allor gelato e fioco,
 nol dimandar, lettor, ch'i' non lo scrivo,
 però ch'ogne parlar sarebbe poco.
- Io non mori' e non rimasi vivo;
 pensa oggimai per te, s'hai fior d'ingegno,
 qual io divenni, d'uno e d'altro privo.

“And now, *Vexilla regis prodeunt
Inferni*—therefore, look,” my master said
As we continued on the long descent,

“And see if you can make him out, ahead.”
As though, in the exhalation of heavy mist
Or while night darkened our hemisphere, one spied

A mill—blades turning in the wind, half-lost
Off in the distance—some structure of that kind
I seemed to make out now. But at a gust

10 Of wind, there being no other shelter at hand,
I drew behind my leader’s back again.
By now (and putting it in verse I find

Fear in myself still) I had journeyed down
To where the shades were covered wholly by ice,
Showing like straw in glass—some lying prone,

And some erect, some with the head toward us,
And others with the bottoms of the feet;
Another like a bow, bent feet to face.

When we had traveled forward to the spot
20 From which it pleased my master to have me see
That creature whose beauty once had been so great,

He made me stop, and moved from in front of me.
“Look: here is Dis,” he said, “and here is the place
Where you must arm yourself with the quality

Of fortitude.” How chilled and faint I was
On hearing that, you must not ask me, reader—
I do not write it; words would not suffice:

I neither died, nor kept alive—consider
With your own wits what I, alike denuded
30 Of death and life, became as I heard my leader.

Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno
 da mezzo 'l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia;
 30 e più con un gigante io mi convegno,
 che i giganti non fan con le sue braccia:
 vedi oggimai quant' esser dee quel tutto
 ch'a così fatta parte si confaccia.
 S'el fu sì bel com' elli è ora brutto,
 e contra 'l suo fattore alzò le ciglia,
 ben dee da lui procedere ogne lutto.
 Oh quanto parve a me gran meraviglia
 quand' io vidi tre facce a la sua testa!
 L'una dinanzi, e quella era vermiglia;
 40 l'altr' eran due, che s'aggiugnieno a questa
 sovresso 'l mezzo di ciascuna spalla,
 e sé giugnieno al loco de la cresta:
 e la destra pareva tra bianca e gialla;
 la sinistra a vedere era tal, quali
 vegnon di là onde 'l Nilo s'avvalla.
 Sotto ciascuna uscivan due grand' ali,
 quanto si convenia a tanto uccello:
 vele di mar non vid' io mai cotali.
 Non avean penne, ma di vispistrello
 50 era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava,
 sì che tre venti si movean da ello:
 quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava.
 Con sei occhi piangèa, e per tre menti
 gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.
 Da ogne bocca dirompea co' denti
 un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,
 sì che tre ne facea così dolenti.
 A quel dinanzi il mordere era nulla
 verso 'l graffiar, che talvolta la schiena
 60 rimaneva de la pelle tutta brulla.
 «Quell'anima là sù c'ha maggior pena»,
 disse 'l maestro, «è Giuda Scariotto,
 che 'l capo ha dentro e fuor le gambe mena.

The emperor of the realm of grief protruded
From mid-breast up above the surrounding ice.
A giant's height, and mine, would have provided

Closer comparison than would the size
Of his arm and a giant. Envision the whole
That is proportionate to parts like these.

If he was truly once as beautiful
As he is ugly now, and raised his brows
Against his Maker—then all sorrow may well

40 Come out of him. How great a marvel it was
For me to see three faces on his head:
In front there was a red one; joined to this,

Each over the midpoint of a shoulder, he had
Two others—all three joining at the crown.
That on the right appeared to be a shade

Of whitish yellow; the third had such a mien
As those who come from where the Nile descends.
Two wings spread forth from under each face's chin,

Strong, and befitting such a bird, immense—
50 I have never seen at sea so broad a sail—
Unfeathered, batlike, and issuing three winds

That went forth as he beat them, to freeze the whole
Realm of Cocytus that surrounded him.
He wept with all six eyes, and the tears fell

Over his three chins mingled with bloody foam.
The teeth of each mouth held a sinner, kept
As by a flax rake: thus he held three of them

In agony. For the one the front mouth gripped,
The teeth were as nothing to the claws, which sliced
60 And tore the skin until his back was stripped.

"That soul," my master said, "who suffers most,
Is Judas Iscariot; head locked inside,
He flails his legs. Of the other two, who twist

De li altri due c'hanno il capo di sotto,
 quel che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:
 vedi come si storce, e non fa motto!;
 e l'altro è Cassio, che par sì membruto.
 Ma la notte risurge, e oramai
 è da partir, ché tutto avem veduto».

70 Com' a lui piacque, il collo li avvinghiai;
 ed el prese di tempo e loco poste,
 e quando l'ali fuoro aperte assai,
 appigliò sé a le vellute coste;
 di vello in vello giù discese poscia
 tra 'l folto pelo e le gelate croste.
 Quando noi fummo là dove la coscia
 si volge, a punto in sul grosso de l'anche,
 lo duca, con fatica e con angoscia,
 volse la testa ov' elli avea le zanche,

80 e aggrappossi al pel com' om che sale,
 sì che 'n inferno i' credea tornar anche.
 «Attienti ben, ché per cotali scale»,
 disse 'l maestro, ansando com' uom lasso,
 «conviensi dipartir da tanto male».

Poi uscì fuor per lo fóro d'un sasso
 e puose me in su l'orlo a sedere;
 appresso porse a me l'accorto passo.
 Io levai li occhi e credetti vedere
 Lucifero com' io l'avea lasciato,
 90 e vidili le gambe in sù tenere;
 e s'io divenni allora travagliato,
 la gente grossa il pensi, che non vede
 qual è quel punto ch'io avea passato.
 «Lèvati sù», disse 'l maestro, «in piede:
 la via è lunga e 'l cammino è malvagio,
 e già il sole a mezza terza riede».

Non era camminata di palagio
 là 'v' eravam, ma natural burella
 ch'avea mal suolo e di lume disagio.

With their heads down, the black mouth holds the shade
Of Brutus: writhing, but not a word will he scream;
Cassius is the sinewy one on the other side.

But night is rising again, and it is time
That we depart, for we have seen the whole.”
As he requested, I put my arms round him,

70 And waiting until the wings were opened full
He took advantage of the time and place
And grasped the shaggy flank, and gripping still,

From tuft to tuft descended through the mass
Of matted hair and crusts of ice. And then,
When we had reached the pivot of the thighs,

Just where the haunch is at its thickest, with strain
And effort my master brought around his head
To where he'd had his legs: and from there on

He grappled the hair as someone climbing would—
80 So I supposed we were heading back to Hell.
“Cling tight, for it is stairs like these,” he sighed

Like one who is exhausted, “which we must scale
To part from so much evil.” Then he came up
Through a split stone, and placed me on its sill,

And climbed up toward me with his cautious step.
I raised my eyes, expecting I would see
Lucifer as I left him—and saw his shape

Inverted, with his legs held upward. May they
Who are too dull to see what point I had passed
90 Judge whether it perplexed me. “Come—the way

Is long, the road remaining to be crossed
Is hard: rise to your feet,” the master said,
“The sun is at mid-tierce.” We had come to rest

In nothing like a palace hall; instead
A kind of natural dungeon enveloped us,
With barely any light, the floor ill made.

- 100 «Prima ch'io de l'abisso mi divella,
maestro mio», diss' io quando fui dritto,
«a trarmi d'erro un poco mi favella:
ov' è la ghiaccia? e questi com' è fitto
sì sottosopra? e come, in sì poc' ora,
da sera a mane ha fatto il sol tragitto?». *Ed elli a me: «Tu imagini ancora
d'esser di là dal centro, ov' io mi presi
al pel del vermo reo che 'l mondo fóra.
Di là fosti cotanto quant' io scesi;
110 quand' io mi volsi, tu passasti 'l punto
al qual si traggon d'ogne parte i pesi.
E se' or sotto l'emisperio giunto
ch'è contraposto a quel che la gran secca
coverchia, e sotto 'l cui colmo consunto
fu l'uom che nacque e visse senza pecca;
tu hai i piedi in su picciola spera
che l'altra faccia fa de la Giudecca.
Qui è da man, quando di là è sera;
e questi, che ne fé scala col pelo,
120 fitto è ancora sì come prim' era.
Da questa parte cadde giù dal cielo;
e la terra, che pria di qua si sporse,
per paura di lui fé del mar velo,
e venne a l'emisperio nostro; e forse
per fuggir lui lasciò qui loco vòto
quella ch'appar di qua, e sù ricorse».*

“Before I free myself from the abyss,
My master,” I said when I was on my feet,
“Speak, and dispel my error: where is the ice?

100 And how can he be fixed head-down like that?
And in so short a time, how can it be
Possible for the sun to make its transit

From evening to morning?” He answered me,
“You imagine you are still on the other side,
Across the center of the earth, where I

Grappled the hair on the evil serpent’s hide
Who pierces the world. And all through my descent,
You were on that side; when I turned my head

And legs about, you passed the central point
110 To which is drawn, from every side, all weight.
Now you are on the opposite continent

Beneath the opposite hemisphere to that
Which canopies the great dry land therein:
Under the zenith of that one is the site

Whereon the Man was slain who without sin
Was born and lived; your feet this minute press
Upon a little sphere whose rounded skin

Forms the Judecca’s other, outward face.
Here it is morning when it is evening there;
120 The one whose hair was like a ladder for us

Is still positioned as he was before.
On this side he fell down from Heaven; the earth,
Which till then stood out here, impelled by fear

Veiled itself in the sea and issued forth
In our own hemisphere. And possibly,
What now appears on this side fled its berth

And rushing upward left a cavity:
This hollow where we stand.” There is below,
As far from Beelzebub as one can be

Luogo è là giù da Belzebù remoto
tanto quanto la tomba si distende,
che non per vista, ma per suono è noto
130 d'un ruscelletto che quivi discende
per la buca d'un sasso, ch'elli ha roso,
col corso ch'elli avvolge, e poco pende.
Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e senza cura aver d'alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'i' vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

130 Within his tomb, a place one cannot know
By sight, but by the sound a little runnel
Makes as it wends the hollow rock its flow

Has worn, descending through its winding channel:
To get back up to the shining world from there
My guide and I went into that hidden tunnel;

And following its path, we took no care
To rest, but climbed: he first, then I—so far,
Through a round aperture I saw appear

Some of the beautiful things that Heaven bears,
140 Where we came forth, and once more saw the stars.

NOTES

BY NICOLE PINSKY

The notes that follow are intended for students and general readers. They were written to approximate some of the literary and historical information Dante's original audience might have had, and are certainly not an interpretive guide.

*I rely on the authority of previous editors, translators, and commentators—first and foremost on the volume of Commentary that accompanies the prose translation of the *Inferno* by Charles S. Singleton, but also on the work of C. H. Grandgent, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Allen Mandelbaum, Mark Musa, Dorothy L. Sayers, and John D. Sinclair.*

The notes to Canto XI include Michael Mazur's annotation for his map of Hell, which appears on pages xxvi and xxvii.

For some cantos, a brief commentary by John Freccero or Robert Pinsky precedes the notes.

—N.P.

CANTO I

The elements of Canto I—vivid, yet tangled and dark—are significant not only for the sometimes enigmatic meanings of any one image or passage but collectively as well, for the emotional, moral, and physical world they establish for the *Inferno*. All of these elements—the woods, the lost path, the mountain, the valley, the leopard, the lion, the wolf with her unappeasable hunger, the Hound who will defeat her, even the guiding figure of Virgil himself—embody the qualities of challenge and mystery that will characterize Dante's quest.

This sense of enigma, like the feeling of peril, is an essential part of the poem's drama. The way figures like the Hound or the sunny mountain may not correspond to exact, identifiable allusions or to definite allegorical meanings is consistent with the action of the quest—and with the appeal that has made the *Commedia* an immediate, enduring success with readers. The path Virgil suggests, and to which Dante agrees, is one where meaning will come in irregular pools and flashes, with effort, in a setting of uncertainty until the journey is done.

The metaphysical shape of Dante's course is clear and general, as indicated by the internal summary given in Canto I of the three realms—Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. But the reality of his course is often particular and local, involving for instance the politics and topography of "low Italy" and historical or mythological names.

In a similar way, the broad, relatively lucid terms of Christian theology and cosmology are balanced by the allusive terms of prophecy, clouded yet highly specific, such as the much-debated birth of the heroic Hound between "felt and felt" or "Feltro and Feltro." Canto I thus establishes the mixed, densely woven nature of the *Commedia* as a whole and of the *Inferno* in particular: a fabric of imagination where varying textures of thought or experience shift and slide and recombine unpredictably. (R.P.)

1. The Bible (Psalm 90:10) allots seventy years as the span of a human life, so MIDWAY ON OUR LIFE'S JOURNEY is the age of thirty-five. Dante was thirty-five in 1300, the year in which the action of the *Inferno* takes place. Other time references in the poem (see Canto XXI) lead most scholars to think of the dark night in Canto I as the night before Good Friday: April 7, 1300. Scholars do not know precisely when Dante began to write the *Inferno*, but it was certainly some years later than 1300, after Dante had been exiled from Florence. By writing about a specific, past date, Dante is able to include many prophetic passages which "predict" political and historical events that occurred between 1300 and the time of composition.
 The gap of years also affords a distinction important throughout the *Commedia*: there is a difference between Dante the remembered and imagined pilgrim, who sets out on a remarkable journey in 1300, and Dante the poet, who writes about the journey years later. The words I FOUND MYSELF hint at this distinction by making Dante both subject and object of the poem's first verb. The same words, with their play on finding and being lost, also initiate a current of wit and wordplay that runs through the poem, even in its darkest passages. The first person singular of I FOUND MYSELF emphasizes the personal, particular experience of Dante, while the words OUR LIFE suggest the general, shared human experience of finding oneself spiritually lost.
2. The DARK WOODS correspond to a place of sin and corruption in the pilgrim's own soul, but also among the political, historical, and ecclesiastical figures of his time. In his *Convivio* (IV, xxiv, 12), Dante speaks of the "erroneous forest of this life."
11. The HILL: the path upward to righteousness; possibly the "hill of the Lord" of Psalm 24:3.
14. THAT BRIGHT PLANET is the sun; its RAYS, divine grace. Medieval (Ptolemaic) cosmology makes the sun a planet that moves around the earth.
17. The HEART'S LAKE is a cavity in the heart described by fourteenth-century science as the location of various passions, particularly fear. It was from there that blood was believed to be distributed to the body.
24. Dante's LEFT FOOT, associated with earthly desires, hinders his progress. *Piè fermo* is literally the "firm foot"; this translation follows the interpretive tradition in which the left foot belongs to the will and drags behind the right foot, governed by the intellect.
- 25-45. Many interpretations have been suggested for the LEOPARD, the LION, and the SHE-WOLF, but the earliest and still the most widely accepted is that they stand for three types of sin: lust, pride, and avarice, respectively. See also Jeremiah 5:6: "Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities." The leopard reappears in Canto XVI.
- 29-32. The sun is in Aries, as it was believed to have been at the time of the Creation: WITH THE STARS ATTENDING IT / AS WHEN DIVINE LOVE SET THOSE BEAUTIFUL / LIGHTS INTO MOTION.
53. SUB JULIO: During the reign of Julius Caesar. Virgil was born in 70 B.C., and Julius Caesar died in 44 B.C.

55. The pagan gods worshipped by the ancient Romans were, according to medieval theology, not merely FALSE GODS: they were GODS WHO LIED, demons or spirits who deliberately deceived their followers.
- 55–57. ANCHISES' NOBLE SON is Aeneas. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil tells the story of how Aeneas fled the fallen city of Troy (SUPERBILIUM) and eventually founded Rome.
61. VIRGIL is regarded in Dante's poem as the model poet, and as an embodiment of art and human reason, exemplifying the best that can be attained without the benefit of Christian revelation. His *Fourth Eclogue* was considered to contain a prophetic anticipation of the coming of Christ.
- 78–87. This is one of the many cryptic "prophecies" and political allegories Dante includes in his poem, and scholars have never agreed about its exact meaning. In particular, there is debate over the intended identity of the Hound. The mysterious phrase "*nazion . . . tra feltro e feltro*"—BORN BETWEEN FELTRO AND FELTRO—admits several possibilities. If we translate *feltro* literally, as "felt," the Hound could be a member of the clergy (friars' cloaks were made of felt), perhaps a politician or the Holy Roman Emperor (officeholders were elected by votes cast into felt-lined urns). Another popular theory is that the Hound is meant to represent Cangrande della Scala, a benefactor of Dante's during his exile (*Cane grande* means "great dog"). Cangrande was born in Verona, which lies between the cities of Feltre and Montefeltro; these cities could well be the "two felts."
82. LOW ITALY may be topographical, or it may be in moral contrast with SUPERBILIUM in line 57 above. The adjectives *superbo* (proud or superb) and *umile* (low) suggest the high state before a fall and the humiliation preceding a revival.
- 82–84. NISUS, TURNUS, EURYALUS, and CAMILLA are all characters in the *Aeneid*. Virgil alternates the names of Aeneas' comrades (Nisus and Euryalus) with those of his enemies (Turnus and Camilla): all four were martyred to advance the founding of the Roman Empire.
- 88–98. In these lines, Virgil gives a brief outline of what is to come in the three parts of the *Commedia*. Partly because of this passage, Canto I itself is generally viewed as an introduction or prologue to the entire poem as well as a part of the *Inferno*. When this introduction is counted separately, each cantica—*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*—has thirty-three cantos, with Canto I making an even one hundred.
- 92–101. The phases of the journey ahead: first, Dante will visit ANCIENT TORMENTED SPIRITS in Hell (the *Inferno*). The SECOND DEATH they face is eternal damnation at the Last Judgment. Next he will travel to Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), where the SOULS . . . ARE CONTENT / TO DWELL IN FIRE because, having repented and accepted their punishments, they know their suffering is temporary. In the third part of his journey, Dante will visit the realm of the EMPEROR WHO GOVERNS FROM ON HIGH (the *Paradiso*), and because Virgil was a pagan and lived IN REBELLION TO HIS LAW, he is forbidden to enter that realm.
97. The ONE WORTHIER who must replace Virgil as Dante's guide is Beatrice, the object of Dante's lifelong love. The historical Beatrice was probably Beatrice

Portinari, who was Dante's neighbor when they were children, and who died in 1290 at the age of twenty-four. Dante celebrates her in his *Vita Nuova* as a living woman, and in the *Divine Comedy* as far more than just a fictional representation of that woman: Beatrice stands for blessedness and divine grace.

CANTO II

Both Aeneas and St. Paul descended into Hell, according to Dante, the first as a prelude to the founding of the Roman Empire, the second in order to bear witness to his faith. Although Dante protests his unworthiness, it is clear that his own descent is meant both as a spiritual experience and as a prelude to political prophecy. He is not Aeneas and he is not Paul because in a sense he is both. It is not a question of merit or of intelligence, as some of the souls in Hell will mistakenly assume, but rather of election, symbolized by a relay of grace that extends from Heaven to Virgil, through three blessed ladies.

The action of the canto consists of a series of dramatic vignettes, contained within one another like a series of Chinese boxes. Virgil tells the story of his encounter with Beatrice, who told him of her encounter with Lucy, who told of her encounter with a gentle Lady in Paradise. The encounter between Virgil and Beatrice, as Virgil reports it, was structured according to the rules of ancient rhetoric. Beatrice began with the obligatory flattery (*captatio benevolentiae*), promised to praise him before her lord, and sent him on his way with a peroration. Her exchange with Lucy, however, was biblical and penitential.

It seems puzzling at first that Virgil should recognize Beatrice. The terms of his praise make it clear that in his eyes she is more than a historical personage. He says that she is the person through whom alone humanity transcends the limitations of time and mortality, represented by the sphere of the moon. This can only mean that Virgil takes her for Lady Philosophy, the allegorical figure celebrated by Boethius in his *Consolation of Philosophy*. The poetic significance of this encounter and of this identification is that they represent Dante's interpretation of the wisdom of antiquity as an anticipation of Christianity.

When Lucy looks down from Heaven, however, she speaks the language of Christian allegory. The pilgrim was driven back to the dark woods by the wolf, but Lucy hears his weeping on the banks of a river over which the sea cannot boast (II, 86–87). The only river of which that can be said is the river Jordan, the final barrier faced by the Jews in the desert after they had crossed the Red Sea. The stages of Exodus, the escape from Egypt to the Promised Land, were interpreted by Christians as a figure for the experience of conversion. In Lucy's theological language, the pilgrim requires supernatural help to cross over Jordan. (J.F.)

- 6–8. The invocation to the MUSES follows the tradition of epic poetry. Dante echoes passages in the *Aeneid*: see III, 147 ("Night deepened; sleep on earth held living things"); VIII, 26–27 ("Now it was night, and through the lands of earth / Deep slumber held all weary living things"); and IX, 224–26 ("Earth's

other creatures now had given over / Care in sleep, forgetful of their toil, / But the high Trojan captains, chosen men, / Held council"). It is somewhat less conventional for Dante to invoke the GENIUS OF ART and MEMORY, attributes he hopes to call upon within himself. As the genius or guiding spirit of art must inform Dante the poet, memory informs Dante the pilgrim.

All quotations from the *Aeneid* are from Robert Fitzgerald's translation (New York: Random House, 1983).

- 12–21. SILVIUS'S FATHER is Aeneas, whose journey to the underworld Virgil describes in the *Aeneid*, Book VI. When Aeneas founded Rome, this passage suggests, he prepared the way for the establishment of the Papacy.
22. St. Paul, the CHOSEN VESSEL (Acts 9:15), tells of his own ascent to the third heaven in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (12:2–4).
- 26–35. I AM NO AENEAS OR PAUL: once again Dante recalls the *Aeneid*. Before Aeneas enters Hades (*Aeneid*, VI, 122–23), he compares himself with the earlier heroes Theseus and Hercules, who descended there while they were still alive. Coming as they do so soon after the invocation to the Muses, genius, and memory, Dante's FEARS and NULLIFYING UNEASE might be interpreted as characterizing Dante the poet—who is about to undertake a writing project of tremendous scope and difficulty—as well as Dante the pilgrim, for whom the journey ahead is a more literal, but exactly parallel, epic project.
- 43–44. Virgil's spirit DWELLED / IN LIMBO, where Catholic doctrine situates the souls of unbaptized babies and virtuous pagans—those to whom it was not given to know Christ (nor could they await His coming to harrow Hell like the good Old Testament Jews: see Canto IV, 43–51).
- 75–81. The first LADY in this gracious, courtly scene is apparently the Virgin Mary. LUCY (or Lucia) is a martyred virgin of third-century Syracuse, the patron saint of illumination and sight. Some scholars have suggested that Dante credited Lucy with his recovery from an affliction of his eyes.
81. RACHEL is an Old Testament heroine. Jacob was allowed to marry her only after marrying her older sister, Leah (Gen. 29:16–30).
101. THREE BLESSED LADIES: That is, Mary, Lucy, and Beatrice.

CANTO III

- 1–7. The famous inscription, in the "voice" of the gate. Hell is presented as a CITY OF WOES, which corresponds exactly to the heavenly city that was mentioned in the first two cantos. POWER, WISDOM, and LOVE are traditionally associated with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, respectively. NO THINGS WERE / BEFORE ME NOT ETERNAL, the gate proclaims; that is, the only things created by God before the fall of Lucifer (and the consequent creation of Hell) were everlasting: the heavens, the angels, and the elements.
15. THE GOOD OF INTELLECT is truth; God is the supreme truth.
- 30–37. SOULS UNSURE: these are the pusillanimous "neutrals" who, in life, would not take a stand. They are punished here along with ANGELS OF THAT BASE

sort / . . . NEITHER REBELLIOUS TO GOD NOR FAITHFUL TO HIM. The occasion of the angels' wavering was Lucifer's rebellion against God; these angels did not take either side.

- 45–48. The waverers, who would not align themselves in life with any cause, are condemned forever to chase a meaningless banner. This is the first example of the infernal system of retribution called *contrapasso* (see Canto XXVIII, 127 and note): the punishment is suited to the specific wrongdoing, often requiring that the damned souls reenact their crimes in some form that grotesquely reflects the essence of the sin.
50. There is some debate as to the identity of HIM WHO MADE THE GREAT REFUSAL, and Dante seems to be deliberately obscure about it himself (see lines 43–44, where Virgil urges Dante not to speak of these souls). The most popular theory is that the soul is that of Pope Celestine V, who abdicated in 1294, only five months into his papacy, when political pressure proved too much for him. He was succeeded by Boniface VIII, despised by Dante.
64. ACHERON is the first of four rivers Dante will encounter in Hell. The names and descriptions of the rivers are largely borrowed from classical tradition, and from Virgil in particular.
77. Dante's description of CHARON, ferryman to the dead souls, relies heavily upon Virgil's. Characters such as Charon from Greek and Roman mythology appear frequently in Dante's Hell, often as demons.
- 105–8. WHAT THAT MEANS, by extrapolation, is that Dante is not destined for Hell: when he dies he WILL BE BROUGHT TO SHORE BY ANOTHER WAY, as Charon points out in line 76, and not come to this crossing where SOULS WHO ARE GOOD / NEVER PASS. Dante is defining himself as a soul not to be damned. He will be even more explicit about his own fate later in the poem.

CANTO IV

Canto IV moves in a series of unexpected turns from light to darkness and from darkness to light, as Virgil leads Dante from fore-Hell down into the first circle of Hell itself. From the dark of sleep, a thunderclap awakens Dante so that he opens his eyes—to peer down into another darkness, in which he can see nothing: the “*cieco mondo*,” or blind world. Into this “sightless zone” (line 9) Dante is led for the purpose of seeing—led by Virgil, the guide who explains that he himself is benighted, unbaptized, and an inhabitant of this dark Limbo. Yet into this place, harrowing Hell with eternal Light, the Redeemer came to retrieve the souls of the blessed of the Old Testament. The catalogues of proper names—first of biblical patriarchs, then of poets, of heroes, and of thinkers—invoke the categorizing, perceiving light of knowledge: a taxonomy of truth enumerated here in the realm of unseeing.

And in this place, around a bright fire that displaces “a bleak / hemisphere of darkness” (lines 57–58), Dante finds the poets of antiquity who have been the luminaries of his own intelligence. He walks with them through the wood of “thronging spirits” (line 55) to the green meadow of the heroic souls, where the poets view them

from a “spacious, well-lit height” (line 101). From this vantage “*aperto, luminoso e alto*,” Dante looks still higher to see the “Master of those who know” (line 116), Aristotle, surrounded by the great thinkers, their names an abundant, almost ecstatic identifying list.

Thus, in Canto IV, the *Inferno* describes itself as a journey that gathers light from a descent into darkness, a pilgrimage of knowledge that penetrating deeper seemingly turns away from the light, which yet reappears—and yet again vanishes, as in the canto’s final line. (R.P.)

- 4–5. The swooning Dante has been mysteriously transported across Acheron without boarding Charon’s ferry, which is reserved for wicked souls. This canto takes place in Limbo, the first circle of Hell.
- 25–32. Traditionally, Limbo is inhabited by the souls of unbaptized babies and figures from the Old Testament who died before the time of Christ, and hence before Christianity. Dante also includes the souls of virtuous pagans such as Virgil, both historic and mythological. The souls in Limbo are punished only in that they may never know God or see His truth, and must LIVE IN LONGING.
- 35–51. Christian tradition has long held that in A.D. 33, after Christ’s death and before His Resurrection, He went to Limbo to claim the souls of the Old Testament heroes and transport them to Heaven. Although this “Harrowing of Hell” is apocryphal in origin, it became official Church dogma in 1215. Virgil died in 19 B.C., and would still have been relatively NEW TO THIS CONDITION at the time of Christ’s descent into Limbo. In lines 35–39, Dante wants to be reassured in his Christian faith in the Harrowing of Hell, but asks indirectly, leaving Virgil to discern his COVERT MEANING. Christ is never directly named in the *Inferno*.
44. OUR FIRST PARENT is Adam.
- 49–50. ISRAEL is another name for Jacob, who had to work for Rachel’s father for seven years before he was permitted to marry her. His SIRE is his father, Isaac.
73. Readers who experience Dante’s poetry in translation will perhaps find comfort in the knowledge that although in this passage he reveres Homer as the greatest poet of antiquity, Dante could not read Greek. His knowledge of Homer would have come from translations—and not complete ones—and from other writers’ references to Homer’s works.
75. Three Latin poets: HORACE (65–8 B.C.) is known for his *Epistles* (including the *Ars Poetica*) as well as his *Satires* and *Odes*. OVID (43 B.C.–A.D. 17) is the author of the *Metamorphoses*; Dante draws a great deal of information about classical mythology from Ovid and quotes him widely in the *Inferno*. LUCAN (A.D. 39–65), also an important source for Dante, wrote the *Pharsalia*, an epic poem chronicling Julius Caesar’s war with Pompey.
76. The NAME they all share is that of Poet: see line 67.
- 90–95. The great souls in Limbo are set apart in this NOBLE CASTLE, whose allegorical meaning has not been agreed upon by scholars. The SEVEN . . .

- WALLS with their SEVEN GATEWAYS may stand for the seven virtues, or the seven liberal arts, or both.
104. ELECTRA in this case is Dardanus's mother, not Orestes' sister. Dardanus is the legendary founder of Troy.
- 106–10. All these characters are associated with Troy, and so with Rome. AENEAS and HECTOR are great Trojan warriors from the *Iliad*; Julius CAESAR would have considered himself Aeneas' direct descendant, and his presence here among the Trojan heroes emphasizes the link between Troy and Rome. The virgin CAMILLA gave her life on the battlefield fighting against the Trojans, and in the *Aeneid* Virgil links her metaphorically with PENTHESILEA, queen of the Amazons, who fought to defend Troy and was killed by the Greek hero Achilles. KING LATINUS ruled the Latini, defeated by the Trojans in the *Aeneid*; his daughter LAVINIA became the conqueror Aeneas' wife.
- 111–12. More Romans: BRUTUS is Lucius Junius Brutus, as opposed to the more famous Marcus Junius Brutus who betrayed Caesar—that Brutus will appear in another part of Hell, Cocytus (Canto XXXIV). This one led the Romans in their revolt against TARQUIN the Proud (seventh and last of the legendary kings of Rome) in 510 B.C., and became one of the first magistrates of the new Roman Republic. LUCRETIA was a Roman lady who committed suicide after she was raped by King Tarquin. Her treatment prompted Brutus's revolt. JULIA, MARCIA, and CORNELIA are all exemplars of female Roman virtue.
- 113–14. SALADIN OF ARABIA sits apart from the group because he alone among them is neither ancient nor Roman. This twelfth-century Egyptian Sultan fought against the Crusaders, but was nevertheless regarded by Westerners as a noble, just, and generous prince. He is in Limbo because he led a virtuous life but was not a Christian.
115. Dante must look up slightly to see the next group of spirits: they are the philosophers and thinkers who led contemplative lives, and they occupy a somewhat higher position than the last group, who were associated with action rather than with thought.
- 116–28. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) is the ACKNOWLEDGED MASTER OF THOSE WHO KNOW. As the intellectual source for Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle was considered the great master thinker. Thus, his PHILOSOPHIC FAMILY includes all sorts of thinkers, not all of them “philosophers” in the strictest modern sense. Along with philosophers (PLATO, SOCRATES, DEMOCRITUS, ZENO, EMPEDOCLES, ANAXAGORAS, THALES, HERACLITUS, DIOGENES) the list includes physicians (DIOSCORIDES, HIPPOCRATES, GALEN), mathematicians (EUCLID, PTOLEMY), mythological poets (ORPHEUS, LINUS), and moral thinkers (CICERO, SENECA) arranged in groups more or less according to their intellectual disciplines. Many are ancient Greeks or Romans, but a few are more modern: the Arab physician and commentator on Aristotle known as AVICENNA died in 1037; AVERROES was a Spanish Arab who died in 1198, and also wrote influential commentaries on THE PHILOSOPHER, Aristotle.

CANTO V

Out of the whirlwind of carnal sinners buffeted about like starlings in winter, a separate flock emerges, flying in single file and wailing mournfully, like cranes "chanting." Their poetic lament and the way in which they follow one another distinguish them from the random horde. These are literary lovers, drawn from the great tradition of ancient epic and medieval romance: Helen of Troy, Dido, and other "knights and ladies of antiquity," all of whom died for love. In the name of love, Dante calls out to Francesca and Paolo. They descend like doves to the nest, and Francesca tells their story.

The first part of her story describes their love in the clichés of medieval literature: a unique and irresistible passion, kindled on sight, swept them to their death. The second part of her story seems to contradict this: in fact, she confesses, their love was neither spontaneous nor predestined. It was suggested by their reading of the romance of Lancelot. In Hell, Francesca seems to be disabused of her romantic illusions. What appeared to have been love at first sight was in fact love by the book. Book and author seduced the lovers, just as Lancelot and Guinevere were seduced into adultery by the traitor Gallehault.

The damned in Dido's train bear witness to the power of literature more than to the irresistibility of love. They were literary characters who sinned and yet claimed to be blameless because of love potions, betrayals, or overpowering love at first sight. In his early poetry, Dante had insisted upon the inevitability of such love for those with "gentle hearts." The second part of Francesca's story exposes the bad faith of such claims. Hers is a cautionary tale, warning the suggestible reader about the dangers of romance, but it is also a palinode, Dante's second thoughts on his own theory of love and the gentle heart.

The episode portrays Francesca as a deluded victim of medieval romance, like a thirteenth-century Madame Bovary, but it also creates one more heroine in love's canon. It is therefore just as seductive as the literature against which it warns. Francesca's name would have been out of place in this company, being that of a provincial adulteress mentioned only in the chronicles, swirling about with these literary legends, had Dante not transformed her into their equal, a rival of Helen or of Dido the queen. In spite of the moralizing intent of the story, its effect is to show Dante's mastery of the genre he condemns. (J.F.)

2. Each circle of Hell, which is shaped approximately like a funnel, GIRDLES A SMALLER SPACE than the one above it.
3. MINOS is a mythological king and judge. Virgil casts him in the *Aeneid* as a judge of the underworld, and it is Dante who transforms him into a demonic creature.
- 35-36. The souls punished here in the whirlwind are those of the lustful. Like all the souls consigned to the first five circles of Hell (Cantos I-VIII) their sin—in a concept derived from Aristotle—arises from incontinence, or lack of restraint, which is intellectual as much as physical. Dante seems concerned with THEIR REASON MASTERED BY DESIRE, as is embodied by their situation buffeted helplessly by the wind, rather than simply with their sexual behavior

itself. Reason, in the Augustinian moral system, is not mere logic-chopping but the quality of mind capable of perceiving truth. Ideally, reason's perceptions guide and anchor desire, which in itself can be as wild and aimless as the whirlwind.

- 50–51. The ancient Assyrian queen SEMIRAMIS became legendary for sexual excess; one legend says that she legalized incest, to justify her own behavior.
- 52–54. SHE WHO DIED: Dido is the Carthaginian queen who kills herself for love of Aeneas in Virgil's epic. The widow of the murdered SYCHAEUS, she BROKE HER VOW / TO [his] ASHES by becoming Aeneas' lover.
- 55. CLEOPATRA, queen of Egypt, was the lover of both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. HELEN caused the rift that led to the Trojan War when she eloped with PARIS (line 58).
- 57. The idea that ACHILLES died for the love of the Trojan Polyxena was popular in the Middle Ages, but does not come from Homer.
- 58. TRISTAN is a hero from medieval French romances, the lover of Iseult, the wife of his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall.
- 65. THOSE TWO are Paolo and Francesca, historical contemporaries of Dante. Francesca was the wife of Gianciotto Malatesta of Rimini, but she fell in love with his brother, Paolo. Gianciotto murdered the lovers when they were discovered. The murder caused enormous scandal, and although Dante does not use Paolo's name at all, or Francesca's until line 103, there can be no doubt as to the identity of these lovers. The encounter that follows, in which Francesca tells Dante their sad tale, is one of the most celebrated passages in the *Commedia*.
- 71. ANOTHER: Again the direct mention of God is avoided in Hell.
- 87. The CITY is Ravenna, on Italy's Adriatic (eastern) coast, Francesca's home.
- 96. CAINA, in the ninth circle of Hell, contains the spirits of those who betrayed their kin. Francesca assumes that when Gianciotto—who was still living in 1300—dies, he will be sent there for murdering his wife and brother.
- 113. LANCELOT is a worthy knight in the Arthurian romances. He betrays King Arthur, becoming the lover of Arthur's wife, Guinevere.
- 122. GALEOTTO, or, in French, Gallehault, acted as messenger between Lancelot and Guinevere. The French version of his name has become a synonym for "pander" or "go-between."

CANTO VI

- 12. THREE-HEADED CERBERUS guards the gate to the underworld in classical mythology, and appears in that role in Book VI of the *Aeneid*. Dante portrays him as a horrible demon, though in classical accounts he is not much more than a three-headed guard dog.
- 23–29. In the *Aeneid* (VI, 554), Cerberus falls quiet when he is thrown a honey cake. Dante substitutes GOBBETS OF EARTH—which the gluttonous demon receives with enthusiasm.
- 46–47. As a common noun, CIACCO means "hog," and it is not clear whether

Dante meant it as a real name—it can also be short for Giacomo—or a nasty nickname. Scholars have not identified a historical “Ciaccio,” but there is a gluttonous courtier by that name in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Boccaccio may have based his Ciaccio on Dante’s, or there may have been an established tradition drawn upon by both authors.

55. THE DIVIDED CITY is Florence. It was “divided” because of two warring political factions: the aristocratic Black Guelphs, led by the Donati family, and Dante’s own party, the White Guelphs, whose main family were the Cerchi. The Guelphs began as one party, but after they defeated the Ghibellines internal strife began to surface, with the Black Guelphs receiving the protection of Pope Boniface VIII. This was the schism that eventually led to Dante’s exile. In April of 1300 (that is, at the time when the *Inferno* takes place), the growing tension had not yet led to bloodshed.
- 58–66. The souls in Dante’s hell are able to foresee the future. Ciaccio’s prophecy is accurate: the things he “foretells” had all come to pass by the time the exiled Dante wrote his poem, and some were only weeks away from the fictional date of April 1300. It was on May 1, 1300, that the White Guelphs (THE RUSTIC BLOC, so called because the Cerchi were country-born) drove the Blacks out of Florence. Later—WITHIN THREE YEARS—the Black Guelphs returned and, with the help of Pope Boniface VIII (ONE WHO WHILE WE SPEAK / IS TEMPORIZING), took the city back, exiling Dante along with hundreds of White Guelphs.
- 66–69. The identities of the TWO MEN . . . TRULY JUST are not known. Many scholars believe that Dante counted himself as one of the two, while others maintain that the reference is not specific. The pronouncement is rather biblical in tone, and it may be meant to recall Sodom and Gomorrah, where there were not ten good men (Gen. 18:32).
- 71–72. Dante names five dead Florentine politicians. FARINATA, MOSCA, TEGGHIAIO, and JACOPO RUSTICUCCI will appear in later Cantos (X, XXVIII, XVI, XVI respectively), but this is the only mention of ARRIGO.
- 79–80. Ciaccio will not be the last soul in Hell to ask this favor of Dante.
87. To the wicked souls, Christ is THE HOSTILE POWER.
- 97–101. Dante’s SCIENCE would be the Aristotelian doctrine that the perfection of the individual lies in the union of body and soul. Thus, after the Last Judgment, when the souls of the dead are reunited with their bodies, THEY CAN EXPECT TO COME CLOSER [to perfection] THEN THAN NOW. Since THE MORE / A CREATURE IS PERFECT, THE MORE IT PERCEIVES. . . . PAIN, the suffering of the wicked will only increase.
106. PLUTUS is the god of wealth in classical mythology, and so it is no surprise to find him at the entrance to the fourth circle, where the souls punished are those who hoarded or overspent their riches. The Plutus whom Dante describes also seems to incorporate some characteristics of Pluto, god of the underworld: scholars do not agree on whether Dante had in mind one god or the other, or both.

CANTO VII

Set among the shades who squandered their substance and those who kept it pointlessly to themselves, Canto VII begins with the clucking babble-language Dante has invented for Plutus, the god of wealth. Elsewhere in Hell, down to the depth of Cocytus, shades speak in comprehensible language: here, these materialists of the fourth circle are all but inarticulate, just as—again unlike the souls in other circles—they are indistinguishable from one another, all as alike as so many coins or banknotes of the same value. Functionally stupid in their greed or in their dissipation, they execute a dance of mindless contraries.

Virgil tells Dante about a deity who seems implicitly opposed to the incomprehensible, bloated Plutus: the goddess Fortune, celebrated by Virgil because unlike Plutus she fosters the necessary circulation of goods among family lines and nations. In contrast to the renewing variations of Fortune, wealth uncommunicated rots the soul.

In a curious link, the poets proceed in this same canto to the fifth circle, where the wrathful tear at one another in the mud, while under the muck below them the sullen—the depressives—gurgles their despairing, unintelligible hymn of regret and misgiving. The unintelligibility and conflict recall the opposites earlier in the canto, suggesting parallels: as the collisions between hoarders and spendthrifts embody fruitless energy directed at the material world, a fruitless, stagnant energy characterizes what might be thought of as the emotional stinginess of the sullen and the emotional wastefulness of the wrathful.

Canto VII, which begins with the guttural, subhuman voice of the god of wealth, ends with the strangulated lament of those who begrudged their vital spirits in life. Hoarding and wasting, raging and festering, all seem part of a single, ruinous abscess, framed by mangled efforts at speech. (R.P.)

1. This utterance—apparently an invocation, and perhaps a warning or a threat—is spoken in words invented by Dante, and not in any real language. Virgil seems to understand it, however. Like all skillfully written nonsense (for example, Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky"), Dante's invented words suggest possible meanings: *PAPE* resembles the Latin exclamation of amazement *papae* as well as the words for "Pope" and "father"; *ALEPPE*, which can be used as an expression of grief, has also been associated with aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which can mean "first one." In short, Dante has succeeded in putting evocative gibberish into outraged Plutus's mouth.
- 10–11. The Archangel *MICHAEL* punished Satan and the rebellious angels *ABOVE*, in Heaven (Rev. 12:7–9).
20. The whirlpool *CHARYBDIS* is one of the twin dangers of the Strait of Messina. Homer describes it and the treacherous rock Scylla in the *Odyssey*, and Dante would have known about it through Virgil's retelling in the *Aeneid*.
68. *GUIDE*: guides or "intelligences" that govern the motion of the heavenly spheres in Dante's ordering of the universe. These astronomical forces bear some resemblance to angels, and some also to pagan gods: Fortune is a bit of both, it would seem, though she is given her place in the Christian order. Indeed, in

his *Convivio* (II, iv, 2–6), Dante says that “angels” and “gods and goddesses” are both simply names for the “intelligences.”

- 87–88. It is just past midnight. When Virgil SET OUT, it was sunset, and the stars were rising. Now they have begun to set.
95. STYX is one of the five rivers that surround Hades in Greek and Roman mythology. It appears in the *Aeneid* (VI, 134, 323).
108. ACEDIA is torpor, a mental or moral sluggishness.

CANTO VIII

3. The TWO POINTS OF FLAME are a signal characteristic of medieval warfare.
18. PHLEGYAS is another figure from ancient myths. When his daughter Coronis was raped by Apollo, Phlegyas flew into a rage and burned the god's temple at Delphi to the ground. Apollo killed Phlegyas, whose shade was punished in the pit of Tartarus. In Book VI of the *Aeneid* he appears as a tormented spirit: “Phlegyas in his misery teaches all souls / His lesson, thundering out amid the gloom: / ‘Be warned and study justice, not to scorn / The immortal gods.’ ” (618–20). It is Dante's innovation to make him the boatman of the Styx, where the souls of the wrathful are immersed.
- 24–30. Unlike everyone else in Hell, including Virgil, Dante is still alive and has a real body with bulk and weight (Aeneas has a similar experience when he boards a boat on the Styx [*Aeneid*, VI, 413–14]). Presumably it is because Phlegyas's skiff MADE A DEEPER CUT / INTO THE WATER with Dante's weight aboard THAN IT WAS WONT TO DO that the soul (Filippo Argenti) who sits up in line 29 notices Dante's presence.
58. FILIPPO ARGENTI was a Black Guelph, Dante's contemporary and political enemy. ARGENTI is a nickname—Filippo belonged to a family called Cavicciuli—which comes from the word *argento*, “silver.” Filippo is said to have shod his horse with the precious metal. Boccaccio and others refer to his savage temper.
65. The name DIS can refer both to Hell's city and to its master, known also (in the classical tradition) as Pluto. In Dante's Hell these are other names for Lucifer.
67. The MOSQUES on the outskirts of Dis suggest the presence of Muslims—that is, to the medieval Christian mind, infidels.
- 78–79. THOSE WHOM HEAVEN HAD SPAT / LIKE RAIN are the fallen angels who followed Lucifer and rebelled against God.
- 118–21. Virgil recalls the legend which says that when Jesus came to Limbo (see Canto IV, 40–51), the demons resisted Him, and He broke open the gate. That was the outer, LESS SECRET GATE where Dante READ THE DEADLY INSCRIPTION in Canto III.

CANTO IX

16. THE FIRST CIRCLE is Limbo, where Virgil's spirit belongs.
- 19–29. Scholars believe that Dante invented this story of Virgil's previous descent

to lower Hell. The witch ERICHTHO would have been familiar to Dante from Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where she is a sorceress able to conjure the souls of the dead.

35–39. The FURIES, also called the ERINYES or Eumenides, appear frequently in classical literature as bringers of wrath, retribution, and ceaseless torment.

Dante's description does not stray far from those of Virgil, Statius, and Ovid.

40–41. Most commentators take the QUEEN / OF ETERNAL SORROWS to be Proserpina, also called Persephone or—as in the *Aeneid*—Hecate. She is the wife of Pluto, king of the underworld, and although she is referred to twice in the *Inferno*, she does not make an actual appearance.

46–47. MEDUSA, one of the three Gorgon sisters, had snakes growing from her head instead of hair. She was so horrible to look at that whoever saw her face was turned to stone.

48. The Greek hero THESEUS, according to legend, descended to Hell and tried to abduct its queen, Proserpina. He was caught and imprisoned in the underworld until he was freed by Hercules.

55–56. THE LESSON THAT UNDERLIES / THE VEIL OF THESE STRANGE VERSES I HAVE WRITTEN is a lesson just as enigmatic as the passage says it is. The words “these strange verses I have written” seem to refer back to the preceding tercet, where Virgil puts his hands over Dante's eyes protectively, not trusting Dante's own ability to keep from looking at what would be fatal to see. That action suggests a lesson to do with authority, with the value of not seeing, and with the limits of what the uninformed reader (or unperfected soul?) should undertake to look at unaided.

Following such an interpretation, it is possible to read the passage both as a justification of allegory compared to more direct ways of treating the subject of evil, and as a warning against excessive or overeager interpretation: it is not always best to see everything plainly and at once. It may be better to have the poet, or whatever authority Virgil represents, cover one's eyes.

71–76. No satisfactory theory has been offered for a specific identity of the ONE who comes FROM HEAVEN to open the gate. Dante may simply have intended him to be an anonymous angel.

80. The LITTLE WAND is a typical symbol of angels' power; it is sometimes used to contrast with the useless display of force and massive strength associated with devils.

81–89. The divine emissary rebukes the fallen angels—now devils—and reminds them of their past defeats. He recalls the way the rebels were CAST OUT / FROM HEAVEN for their crimes, and the treatment of CERBERUS, who had his THROAT AND CHIN . . . STRIPPED OF FUR when Hercules chained him and dragged him out of Hell. The detail about Cerberus's fur being stripped away is Dante's invention, though the story about Hercules comes from Virgil (*Aeneid*, VI, 391–97).

101–2. ARLES, in southern France, and POLA (now Pula), in what is now Croatia, are both sites of ancient Roman graveyards.

120. This is one of only two occasions in the *Inferno* when Dante and Virgil turn TO THE RIGHT. The aberration seems to be intentional, especially in light of

the fact that Dante always turns right, never left, in the *Purgatorio*. Various explanations have been offered for this break in the pattern, but none is convincing enough to be generally accepted by scholars. For more about turning left and right in the *Inferno*, see John Freccero's essay "Pilgrim in a Gyre," in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

CANTO X

Arranged in sepulchers on the outskirts of the city of Dis are the heretics or, as Dante refers to them, the "Epicureans," who believed that the soul dies with the body. One of them, Farinata degli Uberti, towers over the rest, while Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti cowers beside him. Dante's ambivalent treatment of the Ghibelline Farinata reflects his own torn political loyalties: the poet was a Guelph, but he belonged to a faction of that party that was opposed to the papacy and nostalgic for the emperor. His ambivalence toward the second man is more personal, reflecting his problematic relationship to Guido, a fellow poet and the old man's son.

The drama of the episode is based upon a dizzying irony: the pilgrim does not know that the damned do not know the present and the damned are unaware of his ignorance. In Canto VI, Ciacco seemed to know the past and to predict the future, from which Dante mistakenly infers that the damned are omniscient. So Farinata's boast about the triumph of his party, long after their definitive defeat, seems absurdly empty, while Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti's anxiety about the whereabouts of his son seems inexplicable. The reply to Farinata stuns the Ghibelline captain, while the explanation to Cavalcante provokes a cry of pain.

The bewildering exchanges derive from divergent premises and quickly reach logical impasse. The confusion is meant to illustrate the effects of heresy, which, unlike all other sins, was thought to be a sin of the reason rather than the will. Knowledge of the present is the shared premise upon which understanding depends, yet the present itself cannot be defined or described. It is the interface of past and future. According to Augustine, it "occupies no space." The damned lack this knowledge; their temporality is a negative image of our own, a central nothingness expanding with time until it engulfs both past and future.

The drama of misunderstanding and of time is played out at the very center of the canto in syntax, where the past absolute tense in Italian takes upon itself a metaphysical meaning—Cavalcante fears that the use of a past tense means the end of his son's life, rather than the end of an action, as the speaker intends. Guido was once Dante's first friend; here, his refusal to undertake an infernal voyage seems to call his salvation into question. We know that at the time of the voyage, he had only a few months to live. The father's pain is expressed in words that echo Guido's "*Donna me prega*," his difficult and disabused love poem. (J.F.)

9. JEHOSEPHAT, or Kidron, is a valley near Jerusalem. In Jewish and Islamic traditions, as well as Christian, it is regarded as the site where the Last Judgment is to take place (Joel 3:2, 12). After the Judgment, when the souls of the

heretics in Hell have been reunited with their bodies, their graves will be sealed forever.

11. The Greek philosopher EPICURUS (341–270 B.C.) did not believe in the immortality of the soul and taught that “pleasure”—that is, the absence of pain—was the greatest good. To the medieval Christian mind, this represented the ultimate heresy.
- 13–15. Dante’s QUESTION was asked in line 7 about the souls of the heretics: MIGHT THEY BE SEEN? Dante would have known that many Florentines—Ghibellines especially—subscribed to Epicurean ideas; his SECRET WISH is to see for himself whether they (and, some commentators say, Farinata in particular) are here. In this passage, as elsewhere, Virgil appears able to read Dante’s thoughts.
29. FARINATA degli Uberti was a Ghibelline leader of Florence who died in 1264, the year before Dante was born. His story would have been well known to Dante, and he is one of the MEN OF GOOD REASON Dante asks Ciaccio about in Canto VI, 70–75. Farinata was instrumental in the expulsion of the Guelphs from Florence in 1248, but by 1258 the Guelphs had returned and cast out the Ghibellines in turn. In 1260, when the Ghibellines had defeated the Guelphs in battle at Montaperti, Farinata alone strenuously opposed the suggestion that his victorious party should destroy Florence (see lines 83–86). Farinata was posthumously condemned as a heretic and excommunicated in 1283. He was probably a “heretic” mostly in that he belonged to a political party that sought to limit the power of the Church.
- 44–48. Farinata’s Ghibellines drove out the Guelphs, the party of Dante’s family, TWICE: in 1248 and again in 1260. The Guelphs RETURNED TO CLAIM THEIR PLACE both times, however, and in 1300 (when the poem takes place) they were still in power.
- 48–66. The spirit who interrupts at this point is that of Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti, a Guelph with a reputation as an Epicurean. His son Guido was a poet and a close friend of Dante’s. Cavalcante is entombed with Farinata although the two were from opposing political parties; their association may be based on the fact that Guido was married to a daughter of Farinata in an attempt to reconcile the factions.
55. Cavalcante expects to see his SON, Guido, with Dante, since the two poets were such good friends.
- 57–59. This is one of the most debated passages in the *Commedia*. This translation chooses to present the one who IS WAITING YONDER as the same as the one WHO GUIDES ME THROUGH HERE: that is, Virgil. ONE YOUR GUIDO PERHAPS HAD SCORNED has been interpreted by commentators as meaning God, or Beatrice, or—requiring a different translation—Virgil himself.

The nature of the disagreement about the passage may be illustrated compactly by composing different possible English versions. One alternate translation of the lines might interpret the one who waits “yonder” (understood as meaning “yonder in Paradise,” rather than a few yards away) not as the one who guides, but as the one scorned: “My own strength has not brought me, but that of one / Who guides me here, toward one awaiting yonder / One whom

perhaps your Guido had scorned.” And a third version might choose to present Virgil as all three: the guide, and the one who waits, and the one who is scorned: “My own strength has not brought me, but that of one / Who guides me here, and is awaiting yonder; / Perhaps your Guido had scorn for him.”

Underlying the conflicting viewpoints is the fact that the meaning of Guido’s “scorn” (sometimes translated as “disdain”) is a matter of speculation, based on little or no evidence. Disdain for guidance by God, by Beatrice, or by Virgil could suggest Cavalcante’s agnosticism, or his skepticism about transcendent love, or his literary attitude toward epic or toward human reason. In any case, such scorn or disdain (Italian *disdegno*) can be taken as a contrast with Dante’s willingness to be guided.

72. Farinata refers to THAT ART / OF RETURN from exile, mentioned by Dante in lines 47 and 48 just before Cavalcante’s interruption.
- 74–76. THE LADY . . . WHO RULES THIS PLACE is Pluto’s queen, Hecate, also identified with Proserpinā and as the goddess of the moon. Her FACE . . . HAS KINDLED FEWER THAN FIFTY TIMES—that is, it will be fewer than fifty months—before Dante himself will KNOW HOW HEAVY THAT ART [of returning from exile] WEIGHS. In fact, it was almost exactly fifty months after April 1300 that a major diplomatic effort to return Dante and the other exiled White Guelphs to Florence met with failure.
- 77–79. Though some of the Ghibellines were granted amnesty, the Florentine people never pardoned the Uberti or permitted their return.
80. The ARBIA is a stream near the site of the battle at Montaperti, where Farinata led the Ghibellines to victory over the Guelphs in 1260.
- 103–4. In fact, Guido was gravely ill in April of 1300, and he died in August of that year.
112. The emperor FREDERICK II headed the Holy Roman Empire from 1215 to 1250. He was widely reported to be an Epicurean heretic.
113. The CARDINAL Ottavio degli Ubaldini, Bishop of Bologna, was so notorious that Dante is able to identify him by his title alone. He was an ardent Ghibelline and is supposed to have said that he had “lost [his] soul a thousand times” for his party.
122. HER RADIANCE is the glory of Beatrice.

CANTO XI

A note on the map of Dante’s Hell (page xxvi): Maps or pictorial plans of the *Inferno* appear with the text as early as the mid-fourteenth century. To this day, some kind of diagram or visual representation has been included in most editions, usually appearing in the introductory material or with scholarly notes at the end of the volume.

Dante has envisioned Hell as a descending series of circles with elaborate divisions and categories, many of which blend classical models of the underworld with early Christian eschatology. But Dante’s plan is more specific than any antecedent; it even includes measurements. Dante as the pilgrim, and we as readers, cannot know the shape of Hell until told of it by Virgil in Canto XI.

I present an aerial view and a map or “overlay” of the sort we have become used to from weather satellites and military reconnaissance, where many details are obscured by the cover of trees, the smoke of fires, or mist rising from fields of ice.

At the opening of Canto XI, Virgil uses the delay the poets need to get used to the stench from the abyss as an occasion for explaining the physical organization of Hell. They are already nearing Hell’s second level (see “x” in the plan); Virgil’s reference to “three lesser circles” (line 15) denotes the three subdivisions of the seventh circle, devoted to the sins of violence.

Dante and Virgil have entered through the first gate at the river Acheron at the lower right side of the image. They will descend to Malebolge near the upper center and arrive at the deepest pit, near the upper right corner. (M.M.)

- 7–8. ANASTASIUS II was Pope from 496 to 498. During the Middle Ages, he was widely believed to have been a heretic, taught by the deacon PHOTINUS to believe that Christ was conceived in the usual human manner, rather than by divine visitation.
12. This MATTER will turn out to be an explanation: in this canto, Virgil describes in detail the way Hell is laid out, and how the various types of sin are classified. The reader may find it helpful to refer to the illustration on pages xxvi–xxvii and to the chart on pages xxiv–xxv.
- 14–65. Virgil explains the arrangement of the part of Hell that still lies ahead of (and below) the travelers. Three circles remain out of nine in all; Virgil describes them as LESSER (line 15) because they are smaller than the first six circles, being farther down in the “funnel” of Hell. When Virgil refers to the first (line 28), second (line 57), and third (LEAST, line 63) of these circles, he means the seventh, eighth, and ninth circles of Hell as a whole.
- 28–34. The seventh circle (first of the three to come, in Virgil’s explanation) is divided into THREE RINGS; these are subdivisions, and not the same thing as circles. The seventh circle’s three rings hold the souls of violent sinners, in three groups: those violent TO GOD, / TO ONE’S SELF, OR ONE’S NEIGHBOR, listed in order from the most to the least grave.
51. SODOM (Gen. 18–19) is a biblical city that Christian tradition associates with sodomy, or sex between men—considered a grave and unnatural sin in the Middle Ages. The French town of CAHORS was famous for usury, and its name almost synonymous with the practice.
- 53–54. This distinction, between simple FRAUD and treacherous FRAUD, determines the difference between the eighth and ninth circles of Hell. Fraud in general is the worst kind of sin, punished the most severely because, as Virgil points out in lines 24 and 25, FRAUD IS FOUND / IN HUMANKIND AS ITS PECULIAR VICE: among earthly creatures, only humans have the gift of reason, and only they can use it to defraud.
- 58–59. The crime of SIMONIACS is to sell church offices; of BARRATORS, to sell civic offices.
64. DIS in this case is Satan, not the city.
- 65–75. Dante wants to know why the souls they have already encountered are not

punished inside the walls of the RED CITY (Dis). Virgil obliges in the lines that follow.

78–86. Virgil refers to Aristotle's *Nicomachean ETHICS*, in which the philosopher discusses the comparative gravity of the various types of sin. Aristotle's THREE DISPOSITIONS correspond to (and are the main source for) Dante's three main categories of sin, with MALICE equivalent to fraud and INSANE BRUTALITY to violence. The shades punished ABOVE, OUTSIDE, are all guilty of the lesser sins that Dante, like Aristotle, calls sins of INCONTINENCE; that is, they failed to restrain, or gave in to, various passions such as lust, greed, and anger. The incontinent sins are less grave than the others, perhaps because they are crimes of weakness rather than positive will. In general, the worse a sin is, the farther down in Hell its perpetrator is punished.

91. Dante refers to line 51, the PLACE where Virgil mentions Cahors.

97–101. The PHYSICS are another work of Aristotle's.

100–1. Nature is God's child, and art emulates nature—so art is like God's GRANDCHILD.

102–7. GENESIS 3:19 contains the injunction "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," which Virgil interprets to mean that a person must earn a living by nature or by art. Usurers do neither, using money to make money; this offense to art and nature is an offense to God.

109–11. The arrangement of constellations in relation to CAURUS, the northwest wind, indicates that it is about four o'clock in the morning.

CANTO XII

3–7. It is generally presumed that the LANDSLIDE Dante refers to is one which occurred south of Trent hundreds of years before Dante was born, and which created a rock formation known as the Slavini di Marco.

10–11. The INFAMY OF CRETE was a monster known as the Minotaur, son of King Minos's wife, Pasiphaë, by a white bull. Seized by an unnatural longing for the bull, Pasiphaë had the architect Daedalus construct a wooden cow inside which she could conceal herself. In this disguise Pasiphaë satisfied her lust for the bull, and so the Minotaur was CONCEIVED WITHIN / THE FALSE COW'S SHELL. In some versions of the myth, the Minotaur is a man with a bull's head, and in others, a bull with the head of a man: most commentators believe that Dante had the latter in mind.

14–16. THE DUKE OF ATHENS is the hero Theseus, who slew the Minotaur and escaped the labyrinth where Minos housed his wife's grotesque offspring. Theseus was helped by Minos's daughter Ariadne, the monster's half sister.

25. Dante's is a NEW WEIGHT for these stones; they are unaccustomed to the presence of living flesh, as Chiron will shrewdly notice (see lines 72–74 of this canto, and the Translator's Note, page xix).

29–30. THAT OTHER TIME Virgil visited lower Hell was when he was lured by the witch Erichtho, as he explains in Canto IX, lines 19–29.

- 31–33. The reference is to Christ's Harrowing of Hell after His death and before His Resurrection: see Canto IV, lines 35–51 and notes.
- 34–36. The tradition that says a great earthquake occurred at the moment of Christ's death comes from Matthew 27:51: "and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."
- 35–37. Empedocles, among other PHILOSOPHERS, was supposed to have taught that the universe is controlled by the struggle between the forces of hatred and LOVE. When hatred reigns, the world is brought to order, but when love returns to supremacy, CHAOS ensues.
41. The RIVER OF BLOOD is called Phlegethon; it will be named in Canto XIV.
49. The CENTAURS are a race of archers, half human and half horse, who appear frequently in classical myths. They are often, though not always, associated with rape, violence, and mad rages. Like the Minotaur, they are physically half beasts—literal embodiments of the "insane brutality" (see note to Canto XI, lines 78–86) punished in the seventh circle.
57. CHIRON, a learned and unusually even-tempered Centaur, was tutor to the great Greek hero Achilles (see also line 64) and others.
- 60–62. NESSUS, according to Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, IX), was slain by Hercules for attempting to rape FAIR DEIANIRA, Hercules' wife. The dying Centaur had time to plan his VENGEANCE: he soaked a robe in his own poisoned blood and gave it to Deianira, saying that whoever wore the robe would instantly adore her. Deianira gave the robe to her husband, who went mad from the poisoned blood and destroyed himself.
65. PHOLUS is a relatively minor character in classical mythology; however, the name appears frequently as that of a Centaur.
- 76–77. The Centaurs are usually depicted as having the hindquarters and legs of a horse, and the upper body of a man, with the TWO NATURES JOINED at the abdomen.
- 82–83. Beatrice left off SINGING ALLELUIA in Paradise to seek Virgil and ask him to be Dante's guide.
100. This may be the spirit of the Macedonian ALEXANDER the Great, or of a Thessalian tyrant of the same name and approximate era, around 350 B.C. The latter hypothesis is preferred by recent scholars who point out that Dante's mentor Brunetto Latini pairs the Thessalian Alexander with Dionysius much as Dante links the two names in this tercet.
101. DIONYSIUS is not the god in this case: Dante means Dionysius the Elder (c. 430–367 B.C.), Tyrant of Syracuse (405–367 B.C.).
- 102–4. AZZOLINO and OBIZZO were both notorious tyrants from northern Italy who lived at around the same time as Dante. Azzolino was a Ghibelline, and Obizzo a Guelph. Obizzo was supposedly smothered by his son Azzo, who succeeded him. Some have taken Dante's term STEPSON (Italian *figliastro*) to indicate the unnaturalness of the act, or to cast doubt on Azzo's true paternity.
- 109–12. In 1271, Guy de Montfort murdered his first cousin, Prince Henry of Cornwall, WITHIN THE BOSOM OF GOD—that is, in the church of San Silvestro at Viterbo. It is Guy's shade that now appears immersed up to the neck in

Phlegethon. Legend holds that Henry's heart was placed inside a statue or box by the side of the river THAMES.

122-23. ATTILA, King of the Huns (434-453), PYRRHUS, Achilles' son, who killed King Priam of Troy, and SEXTUS, Pompey the Great's pirate son, were all famous for their cruelty.

125. Both RINIER PAZZO and RINIER DA CORNETO were highway robbers of Dante's time.

CANTO XIII

Canto XIII begins with a series of negatives. The images in the opening lines are of what is not: "The leaves not green, earth-hued; / The boughs not smooth, knotted and crooked-forked; / No fruit, but poisoned thorns." And this list of negatives is itself introduced by telling where Nessus had not yet reached (*Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato*, so that the first word in Italian is *Non*). The list is followed by a figure that tells what sort of thicket wild beasts do *not* infest. And in this movement of the poem, Dante and Virgil penetrate to the region of Hell for those souls who violently negated their own being.

The image in Hell of the barren sin of despair is a dense abundance, a forest of anti-life with earth-colored foliage and contorted limbs: a wealth of lifelike non-matter, in other words, that in its luxurious vigor is both more and less alive than the life we know on earth. Despair is soul-lessness, and the shades who after Judgment will display their lifeless earthly bodies from the limbs of these trees appear less like living people than souls elsewhere in the *Inferno*.

The suicide abdicates from reality—maims the soul by wounding the body. In this circle appear souls whose dealings with others have been just, not cruel, in life above: and their having been just, which wins them sympathy, emphasizes the magnitude of the sin of destroying the soul. In the final lines, an apparent digression about Florence twists back to this truth, like a scorpion's tail: Florence abandoned Mars as patron, and took John the Baptist instead, for which the city has always suffered bad fortune in war, though the remnant statue of Mars at the Arno still ensures the city's survival, rebuilding itself after defeat. That sentiment—pagan in itself—turns into a Christian parable of endurance, courage, and patience in the last line, where the doomed shade's total, self-destructive despair is contrasted with the courage of those who rebuild over the ashes. In the Augustinian scheme, despair is a terrible sin, denying as it does both man and God. (R.P.)

6. The river CECINA and the town of CORNETO form the approximate boundaries of a Tuscan region called the Maremma, which in Dante's time was the wildest, densest part of Italy.

9-11. The HARPIES are yet another group of mythological monsters inhabiting the seventh circle who are part human and part beast. They have the bodies of great birds, with women's faces and enormous talons. In the *Aeneid* (III, 210-57), Virgil tells of how the Harpies appeared to the Trojans in the STRO-

- PHADES (a group of islands) and drove them away, soiling the Trojans' food and predicting their COMING WOE and starvation.
17. The travelers are in the SECOND RING of the seventh circle; it is where those who were violent against themselves are punished. The HORRIBLE SAND mentioned in line 18 is the third ring.
44. The bleeding branch and the soul imprisoned inside it are indeed things Dante has WITNESSED . . . IN [Virgil's] VERSES: Aeneas encounters the soul of the Trojan Polydorus in similar circumstances (*Aeneid*, III, 22–48).
- 55–58. The shade is that of Pier della Vigna, a highly favored and trusted adviser in the court of the emperor FREDERICK II. He was eventually accused of treason, blinded, and cast out; despairing, he committed suicide.
61. By CAESAR'S RETINUE, Pier della Vigna means Frederick's court; in line 64 he will refer to Frederick as AUGUSTUS. The conceit is typical of the minister's courtly style of speaking.
62. The COMMON FATAL VICE is ENVY, named in line 73.
72. Pier della Vigna wants his name cleared in the world of the living. This is one of several places in the *Inferno* where the damned ask Dante to preserve their memories above.
- 108–22. The two who run through the wood are not suicides, but willful spendthrifts. Dante distinguishes them from the incontinent spenders punished in the fourth circle (Canto VII) because their sin is one of will rather than of weakness: the incontinent failed to control their spending, but these sinners committed violence against themselves by the deliberate, conscious destruction of their assets. THE ONE IN FRONT is Arcolano (LANO) da Squarcia, who died in 1288 in the "JOUSTING" of battle at Toppo. One story says that Arcolano permitted himself to be killed rather than face life as a pauper; this could explain his exclamation in lines 111 and 112. The other spendthrift is the Paduan nobleman JACOPO DA SANTO ANDREA (line 125), who died in 1239 after squandering a fortune by outrageous prodigality.
- 134–42. The soul is that of an anonymous Florentine suicide. He retells how his (and Dante's) CITY abandoned MARS, the pagan god of war, for John THE BAPTIST when the citizens converted to Christianity. The legend says that Mars punishes Florence with constant war and fighting—and that a piece of his SEMBLANCE, or statue, still preserved in the city (as indeed it was in Dante's time) is what permits it to be rebuilt each time it is laid waste. ATILIA the Hun burned Florence in A.D. 450.

CANTO XIV

- 9–10. The WOEFUL WOOD of the suicides is the ring above and around this third ring of the seventh circle; above and around the wood runs the SORROWFUL MOAT of Phlegethon.
13. CATO of Utica led the defeated Pompey's troops through the sands of the Libyan desert in 47 B.C.
- 16–20. Punished in this ring are the souls of those violent to God, either directly

- or through violence to nature or art. The SUPINE souls are blasphemers, those who SAT are the usurers, and the sodomites move RESTLESSLY ABOUT.
- 24–35. The rain of fire recalls the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19:24: “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom . . . brimstone and fire.”
- 26–29. This anecdote about the rain of fire during Alexander’s invasion of India was popular in the Middle Ages, but it does not appear to be connected to any real adventure of Alexander’s.
36. Even Virgil—who in an allegorical interpretation may represent human reason—was not able to overpower the STUBBORN FIENDS who barred the gate to Dis against the two poets (Canto VIII).
- 38–59. The GREAT ONE IS CAPANEUS . . . ONE OF SEVEN KINGS / WHO BESIEGED THEBES. He boasted blasphemously that he could not be defeated, even by the great god JOVE (Jupiter)—so Jove struck him dead with a thunderbolt.
- 46–48. Assisted by the three Cyclopes, the god VULCAN forged thunderbolts at MONGIBELLO, which is Mount Etna. Legend says Jove used the thunderbolts to beat back the Titans who tried to climb Mount Olympus in the BATTLE OF PHLEGRA.
- 64–65. BULICAME, a sulfurous hot spring near Viterbo, had been well known since Roman times. The local PROSTITUTES used its water for their baths.
- 78–85. Jove’s mother, RHEA, hid him from his father, Saturn (who sought to devour him), on Mount IDA, the highest peak on the island of CRETE.
- 86–98. Dante combines images from several external sources and from his own imagination in the heavily allegorical description of the OLD MAN of Crete. Much of the physical detail comes from Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2:31–35, where the decreasingly valuable metals are revealed to represent a succession of kingdoms. To this Dante adds Ovid’s idea (*Metamorphoses*, I) of the decline of civilization through a series of ages, each identified with a metal (GOLD, SILVER, BRASS, IRON) and each less noble than the one before it. The tears, and the way they form the infernal rivers, are Dante’s own inventions. DAMIETTA is in Egypt.
- 111–18. Dante did not recognize PHLEGETHON, nor did Virgil call it by name, when he encountered it in the first ring of the seventh circle (Canto XII). He asks also about LETHE, the river of forgetfulness in classical mythology. Forgetfulness is not granted to the souls in Hell, so Dante will see Lethe OUT OF THIS ABYSS, in Purgatory.

CANTO XV

The discrepancy between the pilgrim’s respect for Brunetto Latini and the poet’s pitiless judgment is an example of infernal irony. It reinforces the fiction of the journey by pretending that Dante had no choice but to reveal the names of those he discovered among the sodomites. In fact, however, the portrait of Brunetto is an accusation of sodomy leveled against someone whom the pilgrim once respected and loved. As cruel as it is, retrospective disillusionment such as this with an authority

figure has been part of the confessional theme ever since Augustine's rejection of Faustus, a Wizard of Oz of the fifth century.

The condemnation of Brunetto is unspoken, but implicit in the sterile landscape and in the phrase "Your image—dear, fatherly, benevolent," an inappropriate honorific for someone classified as a sodomite, but perhaps reminiscent of Plato's paradoxical description of Socrates as a "spiritual" father. The search for the true father was a theme in ancient epic and was part of Augustine's quest in the *Confessions*. In Canto XV of the *Paradiso*, when the pilgrim meets his ancestor Cacciaguida, it becomes clear in retrospect that Brunetto was a deceptive surrogate and that, for Christians, none but God should truly be called "Father."

To accuse Brunetto of "sodomy" is probably to accuse him of pedophilia, a refusal to acknowledge one's mortality or to accept the limitations that nature imposes upon the lover by reason of age. There is savage irony, then, in praising Brunetto for having taught the pilgrim how "man makes himself eternal," for this is the intellectual equivalent of the same temporal evasion: both the humanist and the sodomite pretend they can escape death. The last image of Brunetto, in which he is compared to a winning runner, epitomizes the pathos of the humanist who so lags behind his own generation that he seems to lead the next.

Brunetto's prophecy will be properly glossed in Paradise by Cacciaguida, in spite of Dante's mention of a "lady" who will explain. So, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas is told to expect prophecy from the Sibyl, but in fact receives it from his father, Anchises. The prophecy, like all of the prophecies in Hell, is oracular, meaning that its truth is beyond the comprehension of the prophet and can be fully understood only retrospectively. So when Brunetto promises Dante future glory, he may be thinking of earthly fame, but we shall see in the last part of the *Commedia* that glory for Dante means Paradise, with Beatrice. (J.F.)

- 4–10. Dante compares the banks separating the bloody water from the burning plain to an earthly BULWARK. The PADUANS' walls must divert the flow of the BRENTA so that the city will not be flooded when CARENTANA—the Alpine region known today as Carinthia—FEELS THE HEAT and the snow melts. Some commentators have suggested that the geographic references are not merely coincidental: they seem to refer to cities with reputations for sodomy.
14. The SOULS described in this canto and the next one are the souls of sodomites: men who had sex with other men. The medieval Church condemned such practices, and homosexuality was generally considered unnatural in Dante's Europe. Virgil explains in Canto XI that the third ring of the second circle holds blasphemers (violent to God), sodomites (violent to God's child, nature), and usurers (violent to God's grandchild, art)—but the act of sodomy is not referred to directly in the cantos where its perpetrators actually appear.
20. The shade takes Dante BY THE HEM because the margin where the poets walk is elevated above the fiery plain: the spirit reaches up to touch Dante's garment.
28. BRUNETTO LATINI (c. 1212–1294) was a prominent Florentine Guelph. He was probably not Dante's teacher in the strict sense of the word, but may well have been a mentor. Latini was a writer as well as a politician; his best-known works are an encyclopedia written in French called *Li Livres dou Tresor*, and an Italian didactic poem known as the *Tesoretto*. The latter describes a moral

journey and may have served Dante as one model for the *Commedia*. There is no external evidence to suggest that Latini was a homosexual; Dante may or may not have invented that characterization. In any case, a strange tension is created between Dante the poet, who places his old master in the depths of Hell, accusing him of what was considered a dreadful crime, and Dante the pilgrim, the sympathetic character who proclaims that COULD I HAVE EVERYTHING FOR WHICH I LONG, / YOU WOULD NOT STILL ENDURE THIS BANISHMENT (lines 75–76).

47. Dante refers to Virgil simply as HE: the two poets never name each other while they are in Hell.

55–74. Brunetto Latini's prophecy draws on the legend which says that Florence was founded by Romans after they conquered the city of FIESOLE in the nearby hills of Tuscany. According to this tradition, Florence cannot be unified because its citizenry springs from two very different groups of forebears: UNGRATEFUL, MALIGNANT FOLK WHO DESCEND / FROM THOSE BROUGHT DOWN FROM FIESOLE, and the nobler, more civilized descendants of the Romans. The stereotype of the Florentines as BLIND (line 62) was widespread in the Middle Ages; its origin is uncertain. Latini (and through him, Dante the poet) places Dante among the SACRED SEED . . . OF ROMANS.

81–82. THE WAY MAN MAKES HIMSELF ETERNAL, which Dante claims Latini taught him, is by achieving fame and recognition that will last after his death. Latini says so in his *Tresor* (II, cxx, i).

85–87. Dante hopes that Beatrice, the LADY of line 87, will fully explain both Brunetto Latini's prophecy and ANOTHER TEXT, the words of Farinata's prophecy in Canto X.

106. PRISCIAN of Caesarea was a sixth-century Latin grammarian.

107. FRANCESCO D'ACCORSO was a Ghibelline lawyer of Brunetto Latini's generation who taught at Oxford and Bologna.

109–12. THE SERVANT OF SERVANTS is the Pope, in this case Dante's enemy Boniface VIII. The ONE he banished to Vicenza, where the river BACCHIGLIONE flows, is Andrea de' Mozzi, bishop of Florence from 1287 to 1295. The Pope transferred de' Mozzi to Vicenza because his reputation as a sodomite had become an embarrassment; shortly thereafter de' Mozzi died, his body DISTENDED IN ITS NERVE / AND MUSCLE—presumably from acts of sodomy.

116. TESORO is the Italian name for Latini's French work, the *Livres dou Tresor*.

118–21. Foot RACES were held outside VERONA every year on the first Sunday in Lent, starting in 1207. The races were run naked, according to Boccaccio, and featured prizes for the runners: for the winner, a bolt of green cloth, and for the loser, a rooster.

CANTO XVI

1. The NOISE is from the cataract that will appear in line 88.

7. Once again the CITY in question is Florence.

17. THE THREE . . . LINKED THEIR BODIES IN A WHEEL in order to keep

- moving while conversing with Dante. The burning rain prevents the sodomites from standing still even for a moment.
- 18–20. Most commentators agree that the *CHAMPIONS* Dante describes are ancient Greek wrestlers, though some have suggested that the comparison is to medieval combatants.
- 30–38. The three Florentines are eminent politicians of the generation just before Dante's. All three were Guelphs. *THE GOOD GUALDRADA* was a lovely and virtuous ancestor of Florence's Conti Guidi, the family of *GUIDO GUERRA*. Guerra and the magistrate *TEGGHIAIO ALDOBRANDI* opposed the decision to attack Siena in 1260; the expedition took place anyway and resulted in the defeat of the Florentines at Montaperti and the return of the Ghibellines to Florence. In Canto VI, lines 71–74, Dante asked Ciaccio about the fate of Tegghiaio and that of his partner in the wheel, *JACOPO RUSTICUCCI*. Rusticucci was a Guelph from a somewhat less important family than those of his companions. He implies in lines 37–38 that his *FIERCE WIFE* drove him to sodomy.
45. Dante explains his facial expression: Jacopo mistook his pity for contempt in lines 22–27.
60. *GUGLIELMO BORSIERE*'s surname means "pursemaker." A Florentine of that profession, he appears as a character in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (I, 8).
66. *WITH FACE UPLIFTED*, Dante speaks in the direction of Florence itself.
- 83–91. This *CATARACT* is the runoff of Phlegethon as it pours down to the eighth circle. Dante compares it to the fall of the *Acquacheta* in the Apennines.
- 91–95. Scholars are quite divided as to the meaning of the *KNOTTED . . . CORD* which Dante takes from around his waist, and which Virgil uses to signal Geryon. *THE LEOPARD WITH THE PAINTED FLANK* appears first in Canto I (see lines 25–45, and note): one of three beasts which attack Dante, it is a symbol of lust and sexual temptation. Some commentators suggest that the cord is the mark of the Franciscan order, which Dante is sometimes said to have joined and then abandoned in his youth. More generally, it may stand for earthly defenses against cupidity, which Dante no longer needs now that he has seen the torments suffered by the lustful in Hell.
- 106–8. This tercet about fantasies that are true and truths that cannot be believed sets the stage for the appearance of Geryon, the emblem of fraud.
110. Dante calls the poem his *Commedia* for the first time.

CANTO XVII

1. The *BEAST* Geryon, with his deceptively human face and monstrous body, is the embodiment of the fraud punished in the circles below. In Greek mythology, Geryon is a giant with three heads and three bodies; Hercules slays him as one of his Labors. A medieval legend has Geryon offering hospitality to wayfarers, then murdering his guests. Dante invented a new, more grotesque form for Geryon in the *Inferno*, perhaps inspired by the locusts described in Revelation 9:7–10: ". . . and their faces were as the faces of men . . . And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails."

16. In his *Metamorphoses* (VI, 5–145), Ovid tells the story of ARACHNE, a weaver so talented and so bold that she challenged the goddess Minerva to a competition. Minerva turned her into a spider for her presumptuousness.
18. The BEAVER was said to dangle its tail in the water to catch fish. Like the TARTAR and the TURK in line 14, and like the spider (Arachne) with its intricate web, the beaver presents an image of deception, lies, and fraud.
27. For the second and final time in Hell, Virgil and Dante move to the RIGHT (see Canto IX, line 120 and note).
31. The PEOPLE SITTING on the sand are the third group of sinners punished in the third ring of the seventh circle. Dante first caught sight of them in Canto XIV, line 19. They are the usurers, or moneylenders, and they are violent to God in that their usury is an offense to His grandchild, art: see Canto XI, lines 100–7 and notes.
50. The COLORS and DEVICE[s] on the usurers' purses, their only identifying features, are debased versions of family emblems or coats of arms.
- 52–64. The YELLOW background with the LION IN AZURE was the mark of the Gianfigliuzzi family of Florence; they were Black Guelphs. The white GOOSE probably stands for a Ghibelline clan, the Ubbriachi. The Scrovegni family of Padua was represented by the SOW PORTRAYED IN AZURE, and many scholars identify the usurer who addresses Dante as Rinaldo Scrovegni, whose son Enrico commissioned the Scrovegni Chapel where Giotto painted his famous frescoes. Not all commentators agree about the identity of Scrovegni's NEIGHBOR VITALIANO, but most believe that Dante meant Vitaliano del Dente, known to have been a Paduan moneylender. This Vitaliano was still living in 1300. THE SOVEREIGN KNIGHT WHOSE SACK WILL SHOW / THREE GOATS is Giovanni Buiamonte, a Ghibelline of Florence.
- 96–98. PHAËTHON convinced his father, the sun god Apollo (or Helios), to let him take the reins of the sun's chariot for one day. The youth lost control of the horses, SPURNED / THE REINS, SO THAT THE SKY AS ONE STILL SEES [in the Milky Way] / WAS SCORCHED. Zeus was forced to kill Phaëthon with a thunderbolt to prevent him from burning up the earth. Ovid tells the story in the *Metamorphoses* (II, 1–328).
- 99–101. Ovid also tells the story (*Metamorphoses*, VIII) of ICARUS, who with his FATHER, Daedalus, flew from the Labyrinth of Crete on wings constructed by Daedalus of feathers held together with wax. Icarus, unmindful of his father's warning, flew too close to the sun, whereupon the wax melted and Icarus fell into the sea and drowned.
119. A trained falcon STAYS ON THE WING until it catches its prey, sees the falconer recall it with a LURE, or becomes exhausted.

CANTO XVIII

1. MALEBOLGE is a name Dante invented; its literal translation would be “evil pouches.” The Malebolge comprise the eighth circle, where sins of simple fraud are punished.

- 27–32. Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the year 1300 the Church's first JUBILEE, granting absolution to those who came to confess and worship in Rome at certain churches and for specified lengths of time. Pilgrims flocked to Rome, creating the enormous crowds and the traffic that Dante compares to the flow of the two groups of sinners in this pouch.
- 43–44. This soul's efforts TO HIDE HIMSELF differ sharply from the actions of those who are punished above, and who begged Dante to speak of them and preserve their memories among the living.
- 48–55. VENEDICO CACCIANEMICO was a Bolognese Guelph who died in 1302 or 1303, though Dante seems to have believed that he had already died by 1300. He and the other souls marching in his direction are pimps or panders; Venedico was said to have sold his own sister GHISOLABELLA to the MARCHESE d'Este.
- 58–60. SAVENA and RENO are rivers that form the boundaries of Bologna; SIPA is a variant of *sì* ("yes") used in the dialect of that region. Venedico's point is that there are more Bolognese in the first pouch of Malebolge than in Bologna itself.
- 72–73. The ILL-BEGOTTEN SOULS in THIS OTHER GREAT ASSEMBLAGE are those of the seducers. Like the panders who share the pouch with them, they are fraudulent in that they deceived and took advantage of the innocent for their own pleasure or gain.
- 80–88. The hero of Greek myth JASON is most famous as the leader of the Argonauts on the quest for the golden fleece of the ram of COLCHIS. When the Argonauts landed on LEMNOS, Jason seduced and then abandoned HYPsipyle, who was herself something of a trickster: when the Lemnian WOMEN KILLED EVERY MALE, Hypsipyle secretly saved her father. Later, Jason also abandoned his wife MEDEA, who had helped him win the golden fleece.
114. ALESSIO INTERMINEI's family was prominent in Lucca; little is known about him, or about why Dante presents him as representative of the flatterers punished here in the second pouch.
- 124–26. The courtesan THAÏS is a character in Terence's play *Eunuchus*, which scholars say Dante probably knew only through Cicero's commentary (*De Amicitia*, XXVI, 98–99). Her flattering response to HER PARAMOUR comes either from Dante's imagination or from his misreading of Cicero, who attributes the remark to another of Terence's characters.

CANTO XIX

- 1–6. SIMON MAGUS (Simon the sorcerer) tried to buy spiritual powers from the apostles Peter and John (Acts 8:9–24). The souls in THE THIRD POUCH are all guilty of the sin of simony, which derives its name from Simon Magus: they used the Church and its offices fraudulently, for money and power.
- 11–24. The JUSTICE Dante sees in this pouch is another example of *contrapasso*:

those who abused the Church and its trappings are punished in openings like the ones in the baptismal fonts at Florence's *SAN GIOVANNI*, where Dante himself was baptized. Many commentators believe that Dante brings up the incident (lines 17–19) of the broken baptismal in order to clear his own name: he may have been accused of impiety for attacking the sacred object (see Foreword, pages xii–xiii).

30. The far, or inside, *BANK* of each pouch is *SLOPING . . . MORE GRADUALLY* because the entire Malebolge slopes toward the pit at the center.

45. *VILE ASSASSIN[s]* and hired killers were buried face down and suffocated.

48–53. The sinner mistakes Dante for Pope *BONIFACE VIII*, who was elected Pope in 1294. Boniface lived for another three years past 1300, which explains the soul's assertion that *THE WRITING LIED*: Boniface's death, apparently, had been foretold for 1303. Thus when Dante appears in 1300 and is taken for Boniface, he seems to be *SEVERAL YEARS* early. The real Boniface was Dante's political enemy, and partially responsible for the poet's exile. Dante condemns him for simony, and indeed many of his contemporaries report that Boniface used his office for financial and political gain. *THE BEAUTIFUL LADY* is the Church—the metaphor was common in Dante's time—and it is possible that Boniface did *TAKE [her] . . . BY DECEIT*; he was said to have engineered the abdication of Pope Celestine and his own election (see also Canto III, line 50 and note).

63–67. The sinner is Pope Nicholas III, who *WAS VESTED WITH THE GREAT / MANTLE OF POWER*—the Papacy—from 1277 to 1280. His family, the Orsini, had a *SHE-BEAR* as its emblem. He was accused of various types of simony and intrigue, and was guilty at the very least of nepotism—his desire *TO ADVANCE / THE CUBS*.

71. *THAT OTHER ONE* is Boniface.

73–82. The *LAWLESS SHEPHERD* is a third corrupt Pope, Clement V, who died in 1314—he may or may not still have been alive when Dante wrote these lines. Nicholas's assertion that Boniface will not wait for Clement as long as Nicholas has waited for Boniface suggests that Dante did already know the date of Clement's death—but he may also simply have guessed well. Clement, a Frenchman, owed his election to the influence of *THE KING OF FRANCE*, Philip the Fair, and remained under Philip's control once he was Pope. He moved the seat of the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, France—he may never have been to Italy. Dante compares him to *JASON*, who bribed *HIS MONARCH* to make him high priest of the Jews, and then tried to enforce Greek customs and religion once he was in office (*II MACCABEES* 4:7–8).

85–88. Jesus asks *PETER* to *FOLLOW* Him in Matthew 4:19, and promises him the *KEYS* to the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 16:18–19.

88–91. *MATTHIAS* was chosen by lot to replace the traitorous apostle Judas Iscariot: Acts 1:24–26.

93–94. Nicholas may have taken a payoff in return for his support for the conspiracy against *CHARLES* of Anjou, King of Sicily and Naples. Charles had declined to marry Nicholas's niece.

99–104. Dante refers to the words of St. John in Revelation 17:1–4. The whore

John describes was traditionally taken to stand for pagan Rome; Dante seems to associate her with the corrupt Roman Church. In Dante's description, her SEVEN HEADS represent the seven sacraments of the Church, her TEN HORNS stand for the Ten Commandments, and her SPOUSE is the Pope.

- 108–11. The Emperor CONSTANTINE was supposed to have ceded power over the western part of his domain to the Church in the fourth century when he moved the seat of his government to Byzantium. THE FIRST RICH FATHER, to whom the gift was said to have been made, was Pope Sylvester I. Many years after Dante's death, the document describing the supposed "Donation of Constantine" was proved to be an eighth-century forgery.

CANTO XX

- 13–15. The souls condemned here practiced occult arts to see the future; as punishment for this impiety their heads are twisted around so they must look BACKWARDS.
34. AMPHIARAUS, one of the seven kings who fought against the Greek city of Thebes, foresaw his own death in battle and tried to avert it by fleeing, but was swallowed by an earthquake while running away.
- 39–43. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (III, 322–31) tells that TIRESIAS, the soothsayer of Thebes, was transformed to a woman when he struck a pair of copulating snakes with his staff. Seven years later he was changed back to a man by again striking at coupled snakes.
44. The Etruscan soothsayer ARUNS came from near Carrara, the source of white marble; in *Pharsalia* (I, 584–638) Lucan credits him with predicting the civil war and Caesar's victory.
51. MANTO, the daughter of Tiresias and a prophetess, was supposed to have come to Italy.
- 53–54. BACCHUS'S / CITY: Thebes, traditionally considered Bacchus's birthplace.
- 60–62. On a small island in Lake Garda the three dioceses of TRENTINO, BRESCIA, and VERONA meet. A chapel on that island fell within the jurisdictions of all three bishops.
- 81–82. After Alberto da CASALODI became lord of Mantua in 1272, he followed the advice of PINAMONTE dei Buonaccorsi to win over his opposition by banishing his supporters. When the nobles favoring Casalodi were in exile, Pinamonte seized power.
- 83–84. Despite the definitive tone of Virgil's charge to Dante about his CITY'S TRUE INCEPTION, neither the digression concerning the origin of Mantua nor Virgil's emphasis upon the matter—this is his longest speech in the *Inferno*—has been adequately explained by commentators. Some believe that Virgil's reputation in the Middle Ages as a magician and the practice of telling the future through random selections from his writing (*sortes Virgilianae*) make his disclaimer appropriate in this region of Hell, where diviners are punished. The speech can be viewed as part of the developing relationship between the two poets, non-Christian and Christian. It is interesting, and perhaps puzzling, that in the *Aeneid* (X, 198–200), the actual Virgil—contrary to Dante's Virgil

here—attributes the founding of Mantua not to Manto but to Ocnis, son of Manto and the river god of the Tiber.

- 92–93. GREECE / WAS SHORT OF MALES because the men were away at the Trojan War.
- 94–96. CALCHAS was the augur who chose the most auspicious moment for the Greek ships to sail from AULIS for Troy. EURYPYLUS was another soothsayer among the Greek expedition.
97. MICHAEL SCOT or Scott (c. 1175–1235) was a Scottish scholar, astrologer, and occultist believed to have served as court astrologer to Frederick II at Palermo.
99. GUIDO BONATTI was a thirteenth-century astrologer, author of a treatise on astronomy. ASDENTE—medieval Italian for “Toothless”—was the nickname of Maestro Benvenuto, a shoemaker of Parma who was known as a prophet and soothsayer.
105. CAIN-IN-THE-MOON: Italian folklore sees the spots on the moon as the shape of Cain carrying thorns; in this legend, he was banished to the moon by God after trying to excuse himself for murdering his brother Abel.

CANTO XXI

If there is a comic section of the *Inferno*, it is in Canto XXI and Canto XXII, where the demons of the Malebranche (literally, the “Evil-Claws”)—with their names the equivalent of Nastydog, Bad-Tail, Hogface, Snarleyhead—torment barrators, the sellers of public office: the crime for which Dante was banished from Florence on the accusation of his political enemies. Athletic, winged, coarsely menacing, the Malebranche, overseeing the torment of barrators in the lake of pitch, combine fear and comedy in a way that may suggest satire directed at those enemies.

The action of XXI is concluded, and that of XXII is impelled, by a fart: the military signal emitted by the demon Malacoda when he sends off his troop to escort Dante and Virgil along the lake of pitch where sinners are boiled. This ludicrous, grotesque element alternates with real horror: in XXII, the sinner from Navarre staring at his arm where the demon Libicocco has just torn out the muscle. This blending of modes can seem cinematic, and at moments—when the two winged devils fight in midair over the burning lake, or when Dante walks the gauntlet of barely restrained, threatening demons—Dante’s dramatic visual imagination anticipates similar scenes of comic tension in classic adventure films.

But on another level the relatively cool, detached feeling of adventure-farce movies has little to do with the hot intensity of Dante’s narrative: when Virgil tells Dante not to fear these devils, the poem is reaching for a moral terrain where the grotesque tormentors and the justly tormented sinners—both recalling Dante’s personal concerns, as well as universal sources of fear—can both be put behind him. The rage and sorrow driving the *Inferno* use this adventure-farce as a way to spend themselves. Because Dante’s goal is transcendent, the Malebranche must be not only terrifying but low, and ultimately not terrifying at all, but self-defeating: the grimacing, barely substantial creatures of bad air. (R.P.)

4. Dante and Virgil approach the NEXT FISSURE—the fifth pouch—of
MALEBOLGE.

8. In Dante's time the VENETIAN ARSENAL was one of Europe's greatest and most impressive shipyards.
36. The demons of the fifth pouch are collectively called MALEBRANCHE. The name literally means "Evil-Claws." (For more on this, see the lead note to this canto.)
- 36-42. SANTA ZITA is the patron saint of the city of Lucca. Lucca was governed in the Middle Ages by a council of ten ELDERS, who were chosen from the general population and rotated through short terms of office. The city's reputation for BARRATRY—the selling of public office—does not originate with Dante; a number of contemporaneous accounts support the accusation that unusually many Luccan public officials were corrupt. The reference to BONTURO in line 40 is sarcastic: Bonturo Dati apparently was the worst barrator in Lucca and routinely bought and sold political power.
49. The SACRED FACE of Lucca is a wooden crucifix, supposedly completed miraculously while Nicodemus, who had begun the carving, slept. Kept in the cathedral at Lucca, it was considered a holy object. Here the demon also uses the phrase mockingly to refer to the sinner's rear end.
50. The river SERCHIO flows near Lucca.
- 64-65. Virgil may mean that he WAS IN SUCH A FRAY on his previous journey through Hell (see Canto IX, 19-29 and note)—or perhaps he is referring to the encounter with the demons at the gates of Dis in Canto VIII, forgetting that in that case the intercession of a heavenly messenger was required.
76. MALACODA's name means "Bad-Tail."
- 92-95. Some scholars say that Dante was actually among the Tuscan Guelphs who besieged the Pisan fort of CAPRONA in August 1289.
- 107-9. Malacoda is lying: in fact, all the bridges of the sixth pouch are broken, as will become clear.
- 110-12. THE ROAD HERE WAS RUINED in the earthquake that took place when Jesus died on the Cross: the travelers saw other damage from that earthquake in Canto V and Canto XII. Malacoda's comment reminds us of the time, which Dante tracks carefully throughout the *Inferno*. The pilgrim's dark night in the woods was the night of Thursday, April 7. He battled the three beasts and met Virgil in the course of Good Friday, April 8, and entered Hell that evening. At midnight (see Canto VII, 87-88 and note) he had reached the fourth circle, and at four o'clock, he was about to enter the seventh (Canto XI, 109-11 and note). Now it is seven in the morning on Holy Saturday, April 9, 1300, and Jesus died at noon—FIVE HOURS LATER THAN NOW—1266 years and one day ago, when He was in His thirty-fourth year.
- 116-22. The demons' names are Dante's inventions; some of them have been interpreted as plays on the actual names of Luccan families.

CANTO XXII

4. The ARETINES are the people of Arezzo. In 1289 the Aretine Ghibellines were defeated at Campaldino by the Florentine Guelphs; Dante may have been present and seen the Aretine cavalry.

- 17–19. Medieval sailors believed that DOLPHINS jumping were a sign of stormy weather on the way.
- 43–51. Very little is known about this sinner. His name, according to early commentators, is Ciampolo, but scholars have discovered nothing more about him. THIBAUT II was king of NAVARRE from 1253 to 1270.
- 76–83. The Sardinian friar GOMITA was a chancellor to the judge Nino Visconti of Pisa. He was a notorious barrator, and eventually was hanged for selling some prisoners of Nino's their freedom.
84. Not much is known for certain about DON MICHEL ZANCHE OF LOGODORO, but it seems he may have replaced Fra Gomita as chancellor in Pisa, and that he was even more corrupt than the friar. Michel Zanche was murdered in 1275 by Branca d'Oria, who appears in Canto XXXIII.
- 115–16. THE VERY ONE / WHO FIRST OPPOSED loosening their grasp on the sinner was Cagnazzo, in lines 102–3.

CANTO XXIII

2. The FRIARS MINOR are the Franciscans, who took vows of poverty and humility. Virgil and Dante here emulate the Franciscan custom of traveling in pairs, with the senior brother going before.
- 3–8. Among the ancient Greek didactic animal fables attributed to AESOP is the one in which a MOUSE wishing to cross a river asks the help of a FROG, who ties the mouse to himself by a string and starts across the river. In mid-stream, the frog tries to kill the mouse by diving, but while the mouse is struggling to save himself, a bird of prey flying by notices the commotion and in some versions snatches up both frog and mouse, and in some only the treacherous frog. The moral is the bad end that comes to one who tries to harm others.

If Dante had in mind the version where the mouse survives, a likely application of the fable is that, like the innocent mouse, Dante and Virgil complete their crossing while their evil escort comes to grief. This would represent a similarity between the two stories' ENDS AND THEIR BEGINNINGS: at the beginning, a request for passage; at the end, a downfall for the evil-minded conductor while the intended victim continues along. However, if the relevant version is one where both the frog and the mouse are carried away, the outcome is roughly parallel to the fact that both the Navarrese and his tormentor are in the boiling pitch.

22. LEAD-BACKED GLASS: that is, a mirror.
57. CLUNY'S MONKS are Benedictines, an order sometimes thought of as living especially well.
61. The cloaks INFLICTED BY FREDERICK were supposedly made of lead: Frederick II was said to have forced traitors into such garments, then put them into a cauldron that was heated until the lead grew hot and eventually boiled.
98. The JOVIAL FRIARS, the military and religious order of the Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary, were known as "jovial" because, despite the order's noble

purposes (defending widows and orphans, furthering peace in Italy), its members had a reputation for luxury and the enjoyment of worldly pleasures.

- 99–103. CATALANO di Guido di Ostia, a Guelph, and LODERINO degli Andalò, a Ghibelline, participated in the founding of the Jovial Friars. For a time in 1265 and 1267 they shared the office of *podestà* (roughly equivalent to mayor or chief magistrate) in Florence. The sharing of the position supposedly was designed TO KEEP THE PEACE between Guelphs and Ghibellines. However, during their time in office, in keeping with the plans of Pope Clement IV, there was considerable corruption and strife, leading to the expulsion of the Ghibellines from Florence and to the destruction of the houses of the Uberti, a Ghibelline family, in the district of Florence called the GARDINGO.
- 110–18. THE ONE IMPALED THERE is Caiphas, the high priest who in the council of the Pharisees argued that THE EXPEDIENT WAY would be to give up ONE MAN—namely, Jesus—for the good of the many (John 11:49–50). HIS FATHER-IN-LAW is Annas, who with OTHERS OF THAT COUNCIL of the Sanhedrin collaborated in the decision, thereby sowing A SEED OF EVIL FOR THE JEWS: the fruit of this seed would be the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews.
138. HE WHO HOOKS THE SINNERS is Malacoda, who gave false information about the broken bridge in Canto XXI, lines 107–9.

CANTO XXIV

- 1–2. THE SUN moves through AQUARIUS (the Water Carrier) from January 20 to February 18.
5. Hoarfrost's WHITE SISTER is the snow.
- 31–32. THOSE WHO WORE / LEAD MANTLES are the hypocrites of Canto XXIII.
84. The list of Libyan serpents, like some of the imagery that follows, is based on Lucan's *Pharsalia* (IX, 711–14, 719–21), in which the CHELYDRID leaves a trail of smoke, the AMPHISBAENA has two heads, one at each end, and the JACULI can fly like arrows. The PHAREAE plough grooves in the earth with their tails. The CENCHRES move always in a single straight line.
94. In mythological lore the mineral HELIOTROPE (bloodstone) was supposed to cure snakebite and to render its carrier invisible.
- 105–10. In this account of the PHOENIX (derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, XV, 392–407), the bird lives for FIVE HUNDRED YEARS, then builds a nest which bursts into FLAMES in which the bird dies, to be reborn from the ashes.
- 110–15. The account of ONE WHO FALLS and who WHEN HE RISES STARES ABOUT CONFUSED appears to describe an epileptic seizure.
- 123–28. VANNI FUCCI, illegitimate son (or “MULE”) of Fuccio de' Lazzari, was a combative partisan of the Black Party in PISTOIA, well known as A MAN / OF BLOOD AND RAGE. Dante points this out while asking, in effect, why Fucci is punished among the thieves in this eighth circle of Hell, rather than in the seventh, boiled in the blood of Phlegethon with the shades of the violent.
- 135–37. Historical accounts survive of Vanni Fucci's robbery in 1293, with an ac-

complice, of a church in Pistoia. An innocent man was on the point of being executed when the truth was revealed. Fucci escaped.

138–48. Vanni Fucci's prophecy has two parts, one quite explicit and the second more veiled and allegorical. First he forecasts in terse summary the political events of 1300 and 1301 that led to Dante's personal catastrophe, his exile from Florence. Fucci, as an ardent follower of the Black Guelphs, does not want Dante, who is a White Guelph, to DELIGHT TOO MUCH in Fucci's shame and punishment: I HAVE TOLD IT TO BRING GRIEF TO YOU.

The prophesied events, which Dante had witnessed and endured by the time he composed the *Commedia*, are as follows: in May 1301, the Pistoian White Party, aided by the Whites who were in power in Florence, expelled the Blacks, also destroying their houses and property. The following autumn, Charles of Valois arrived in Florence, supposedly to maintain peace between the two parties, and therefore was admitted into the city unopposed. Once in a position of power, he betrayed the Whites and sided with the Blacks, who led riots against the houses of the Whites. During the following year, in a series of official banishments, FLORENCE CHANGE[d] HER CITIZENS / AND WAYS by exiling the Whites, including Dante.

The more blurred and allegorical part of the prophecy, according to many commentators, refers to Moroello Malaspina, a Black Guelph general called forth by the war god Mars to defeat the Whites in battle, as lightning—associated with VAPOR in the science of the time—BREAKS THROUGH / AND TEARS THE MIST. With this mixture of the pointed and the enigmatic, the contentious shade of Vanni Fucci hopes to disturb Dante the pilgrim as much as possible.

CANTO XXV

The notion of Horror as we know it from fiction or the movies involves detailed, uncanny transformation of the human body, with erotic and moral overtones: the overwhelmed stare of the zombie; the flickering eyes of the aroused mummy; the elegant neck bite that changes the virginal heroine forever; Jekyll or the Werewolf helplessly becoming stronger, hairier, more animal; the hunger of George Romero's living dead, relentless and contagious. The body may be snatched or bitten, invaded or inverted or duplicated, obscenely revived or repellently distorted, but above all it changes. The human takes on qualities of the animal or of inert matter. In this sense of the word, Horror has one of its earliest manifestations in Canto XXV.

The body does change in Ovid and Lucan—as Dante acknowledges here in his audacious challenge to the two Latin poets. But it could be argued that in the *Metamorphoses*, mutation is presented as a fact rather than a moral process: it is magical and objective rather than psychological. Dante implies something like this when he says that Ovid “never transformed two individual / Front-to-front natures so both forms as they met / Were ready to exchange their substance” (XXV, 99–101). That is, Dante suggests that not only will his image of transformation present the external account of an emotional or erotic change, as when a man becomes a snake

or a woman becomes a fountain: he will give an account of moral interpenetration, and of psychological complicity. The idea of *contrapasso*, in which the suffering in Hell extends or reproduces the sin, gives this mutual transformation a dimension absent from Dante's pre-Christian models, he seems to claim.

The passage (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 576–89) where Ovid's Cadmus changes into a serpent seems to support Dante's boast. The passage, which Dante not only alludes to but borrows from, generates wonder and pathos; but the horror of losing one's nature to another, and the sense of "readiness" or complicity, are not part of Ovid's art. Similarly, Lucan's description of Sabellus putrefying from the legs up (*Pharsalia*, IX, 79–97) is vivid and impressive, but it does not accomplish the blend of sexual transformation, quasi-scientific detail, and subjective moral corruption associated with Horror. Dante's difference from his classical predecessors seems to be related, as he implies, to Christian ideas of form, nature, and substance.

The living dead of the *Inferno*—denied eternal life, yet full of a vigorous other-life—anticipate the Romantic creation of Horror as a literary and cinematic form, the nineteenth-century vampires and monsters conceived by Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and others. Dante's descriptions—in XXV, the way the lizard's hind legs twist together to form a penis, while from the man's penis a pair of feet grow; or the way the man's pierced navel emits a stream of smoke; or the description of the reptile's snout receding to form a human face—bring dark colors to Ovidian immediacy.

But this fleshly imagery writhes from the crannies of an exacting architecture. These thieves who ignored the boundary of *thine* and *mine* in life now merge as shades, their shells of personal identity made horribly permeable. Amid this blending "as if made out of hot wax" (lines 59–60), the eye of the poet identifies and delineates, carefully distinguishing such details as the uncanny yawn of the victim gazing down at the reptile who has bitten him. And a tough scholastic vocabulary of precise abstractions resists all the merging and shape-shifting: "With both not what they were, / Yet neither"—a phrase, on the other hand, possibly borrowed from Ovid's account of Hermaphroditus (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 373–79).

Canto XXV opens with one character gesturing obscenely at God with both hands, then proceeds from a snake-ridden centaur through a series of spectacular transformation scenes, each with a sexual energy counterweighted by a nausea or confusion of the rational intelligence—the witnessing intelligence that partly carries the day and partly, in the blur of the canto's closing lines, acknowledges its bewilderment. (R.P.)

2. MAKING THE FIG is an obscene gesture, still used in Italy, made by poking the thumb through the second and third fingers of the clenched fist.
12. THE SEED that Pistoia is said to SURPASS is its founding by the conspirator Catiline and survivors of the army he led in his rebellion against the Roman Republic.
15. It is Capaneus (see Canto XIV, 37–59) WHO FELL FROM THE THEBAN WALL.
20. The swampy wilderness of the MAREMMA, on the Tuscan coast, was infested by snakes.
- 25–33. The CACUS of classical myth was the son of Vulcan and Medusa, a half-

- human monster. Using a subterfuge to hide the crime, he stole the cattle of Hercules, who saw through the trick and killed him, giving him a HUNDRED BLOWS though Cacus died after living only long enough to FEEL TEN HIT.
41. CIANFA Donati, a Florentine of noble family, is mentioned in contemporary accounts as a cattle thief and as breaking into shops. He has been transformed into the SERPENT that DARTED FORWARD in line 49.
42. TO BE SURE MY LEADER HEARD, I SIGNALLED HIM: these words might be taken to mark the pilgrim's increasing confidence as the poem progresses, in contrast to his initial timidity and dependence upon Virgil.
49. The SERPENT here is Cianfa Donati, mentioned in line 41.
67. AGNELLO de' Brunelleschi was another Florentine nobleman known as a thief.
81. Just as the first serpent (line 49) is the transformed shade of Cianfa Donati, this FIERY LITTLE SERPENT . . . PEPPERCORN BLACK AND LIVID, is the shade of Francesco de' Cavalcanti, as becomes apparent in lines 144–45. (See note to 144–45.)
- 81–82. The TWO WHO STAYED after the transformation of Agnello in lines 49–77 are two Florentines of whom little is known: PUCCIO SCIANCATO Galigai (see line 142) and BUOSO (see line 133), who is about to be transfixed at the navel by the FIERY LITTLE SERPENT.
- 84–85. THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE FED / WHEN LIFE BEGINS is the navel. The thief, who took goods by violating rightful boundaries, is violated in the place where we first take nourishment.
- 91–96. LUCAN (*Pharsalia*, IX, 763–76) describes how the body of the Roman soldier SABELLUS was grotesquely reduced to a puddle of corruption by the bite of a little Libyan snake. In subsequent lines (IX, 790–97) NASIDIUS, another soldier, dies bloated and burning from the bite of another variety of serpent.
- OVID describes the transformation of CADMUS into a snake (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 576–89) as punishment for killing a dragon sacred to Mars. In another passage (*Metamorphoses*, V, 572–641), the nymph ARETHUSA is transformed into a fountain by Diana, to protect her from the river god Alpheus.
112. THE MEMBER MAN CONCEALS is his penis.
117. THE UNHOLY LIGHTS THAT STARED ABOVE THE MUZZLES are their eyes.
- 129–33. THE SOUL THAT HAD BEEN MADE / A BEAST is BUOSO, believed by some commentators to be the nephew of the Buoso Donati mentioned in Canto XXX, line 42.
135. DEADWEIGHT: the Italian word *zavorra* means ballast, worthless stuff used to weight down a ship to improve navigation. The meaning here appears to be scornful.
- 137–39. The idea that the poet has perhaps TANGLED THINGS in his account of the transformations of the thieves, and his use of the terms CONFUSION and BEWILDERED, suggest that some of the difficulty readers may experience in keeping straight the identity of these thieves could be appropriate to the spirit of this canto. This idea recalls the way the hoarders and spenders of Canto VII remain an anonymous mass.
142. PUCCIO SCIANCATO (“Sciancato” means “the lame one”) is the only one of the five thieves—three who appear at the beginning of the canto and two who

run up in reptile form—who goes untransformed. Cianfa, in the form of the six-legged serpent, stings Agnello and merges with him in lines 49–76; Francesco de' Cavalcanti, in the form of the fiery little serpent, changes forms with Buoso after piercing him in the navel.

One early source refers to Puccio as a particularly graceful and courteous thief.

144–45. HE / WHOSE DEATH the town of GAVILLE . . . [would] HAVE GOOD CAUSE TO GRIEVE is Francesco de' Cavalcanti, who was killed by some citizens of that place. His kinsmen avenged him by killing nearly everyone in the town, which is what gives Gaville reason to grieve his death.

CANTO XXVI

All the characters who speak in the *Inferno* are near contemporaries of the poet except for Ulysses, who will be mentioned several times more in the course of the *Commedia*. The ideals Ulysses expresses are reminiscent of those espoused by an equally self-confident Dante in an unfinished philosophical work, the *Convivio*. The voyage of Ulysses was taken in antiquity as an allegory for the education of the soul, whose return home was taken as a sign of its deliverance. Although he did not know Homer's text, Dante certainly knew of its happy ending. By changing it, he suggests that no one could survive such a journey on one's own.

Geryon is the emblem of the pilgrim's journey, and Ulysses' voyage is its counterpart. The difference between the two voyages is that Ulysses undertakes his "insane flight" alone, while Virgil guides the pilgrim on the shoulders of the monster. This is much like the opposition in Canto I between the pilgrim's abortive attempt to climb the mountain on his own and the longer, guided journey on which Virgil leads him. It might be said that the successful journey of the pilgrim begins after he survives the metaphoric drowning (Canto I, 18–21) to which Ulysses fell victim. What separates their fate is the will of God (XXVI, 134).

Dante may have known that Aeneas' speech to his men in Virgil's poem was modeled on Odysseus' speech to his men in the *Odyssey*. Dante reconstructs an imagined Homeric archetype by echoing Aeneas ("O brothers . . .") but transforming Aeneas' serenity into Ulysses' thirst for the unknown. This extraordinary act of literary triangulation suggests that Ulysses' disaster foreshadowed Aeneas' success, upon which Rome was founded. The result is the portrait of a Ulysses whose individualism is the antithesis of Aeneas' filial and civic piety. His intellectual pride is not unlike that of the younger Dante, whom he perhaps represents.

Dante stands apart here as the two ancient figures speak in the high style of ancient tragedy. This is a matter not of language but of the rhetoric the ancients considered appropriate for the discussion of lofty themes. In the Gospels, Christ established a new Christian rhetoric by speaking of the loftiest matters in the humblest idiom. When Dante speaks of Virgil's poem as *tragedy* and his own as *comedy*, he means that his poem is written in the humble speech of sacred Scripture. He illustrates the point in the next canto when Guido da Montefeltro undercuts the rhetorical decorum by interrupting in his native dialect. (J.F.)

5. FIVE OF YOUR CITIZENS: see note to Canto XXV, line 142.
7. According to one belief, dreams that came NEAR MORNING were prophetic.
9. Some commentators conclude that the PRATO wishing Florence ill is the neighboring small town of that name, which will join others in rebelling against Florence's power. Others think the reference is to Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, sent by Pope Benedict XI in 1304 to pacify the Florentine factions; failing, he left the town delivering curses and excommunication upon it.
- 36–40. THE ONE AVENGED BY BEARS was the biblical prophet Elisha: after some boys mock him, two bears come out of the forest and tear the boys (II Kings 2:23–24). Elisha also sees ELIJAH'S CHARIOT / CARRIED BY REARING HORSES (II Kings 2:9–12).
56. ETEOCLES and Polynices, twin sons of Oedipus and Jocasta, struggled against each other to gain the rule of Thebes, causing the war of the Seven against Thebes. The brothers finally killed each other in single combat. Their bodies were placed on a single pyre, but because of their eternal enmity the flame split in two.
- 58–62. ULYSSES AND DIOMEDES were Greek leaders in the Trojan War, known for their cunning. Ulysses devised the decisive trick of the wooden horse that the Trojans brought within their city walls, unaware of the Greek warriors hiding inside it. The defeat of Troy sent forth Aeneas and his companions, THE ROMANS' NOBLE SEED.
- 63–65. Ulysses and Diomedes used their guile to persuade Achilles to leave DEI-DAMIA and his child by her to join the Greek forces, though they knew his death was prophesied. The PALLADIUM was a statue of Athena, believed to protect the city, which they stole from Troy. Scholars believe that all of this material came to Dante not from Homer but through the second book of the *Aeneid*.
- 74–75. It seems possible that in writing the words "GREEKS . . . MIGHT TREAT WORDS OF YOURS WITH SOME DISDAIN," Dante is acknowledging that he did not know Greek. The formal, rhetorical quality of Virgil's next words to the Greek shades may suggest the qualities of that language, or a traditional idea of the Greeks as haughty.
84. THE GREATER HORN OF FLAME is the spirit of Ulysses.
88. CIRCE was the enchantress who changed men to swine. She detained Ulysses on his voyage home to Ithaca after the Trojan War.
- 89–90. GAETA was founded by Aeneas and named after his nurse (*Aeneid*, VII, 1–5).
93. PENELOPE was the faithful wife of Ulysses.
- 103–4. The MARKERS that HERCULES LET STAND—the Pillars of Hercules—formed when that hero split a single mountain in two, are the promontories that face one another across the Strait of Gibraltar, once believed to be the westernmost limit of the navigable world.
- 105–6. CEUTA is a town in North Africa; SEVILLE, in Spain: Ulysses sailed westward beyond Gibraltar.
- 121–22. By ALWAYS GAINING ON THE LEFT they sail south, seeing only the stars of THE OTHER POLE: that is, the southern hemisphere.

127. In the geography of the *Commedia* there are no landmasses in the southern hemisphere except for the mountain of Purgatory, which is the MOUNTAINTOP Ulysses saw DIM IN THE DISTANCE. See Canto XXXIV, lines 122–28 and note.

CANTO XXVII

Guido da Montefeltro and Ulysses seem to be guilty of the same unnamed sin, having to do with political cunning. There is irony in juxtaposing the legendary hero with a contemporary *condottiere*, as if to say that the difference between the two sinners were merely a question of style. Virgil's disdain ("you speak—this one's Italian") underscores the difference in rhetoric between Ulysses' tragic style and the dialect that Guido thinks he overhears when Virgil takes his leave of Ulysses. Nevertheless, that difference would appear to be of no moral significance, given the identical collocation of the sinners.

The political cunning exhibited by Guido is more familiar to us than it would have been to Guido's contemporaries because we have come to associate such cunning with politics in the modern world. We think of Machiavelli as the first to have revealed politics' dirty secrets to "those who do not know," but in fact, Guido's revelations from Hell are of the same order. He tells the pilgrim that he is willing to tell the truth about his advice to the Pope only because he believes it will never be made public in the world above. His confession became the epigraph for T. S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

There are several points of resemblance between Guido's story and Machiavelli's *Prince*. First of all, both texts refer to the image of the politician as lion or fox. Both refer to the political counselor as physician, rather than as lawyer, so that any violence he suggests can be considered therapy for the body politic. Guido's strategic advice—"promise much, deliver little"—is reminiscent of the chilling aphorisms of *The Prince*, tactically useless, but morally revealing. Finally, Machiavelli uses Pope Julius II as an example of an intrepid prince, while Dante refers to Boniface as "the Prince of new Pharisees."

The framework of Hell creates an extraordinary anachronistic illusion for the modern reader. Dante's text seems to anticipate and then refute Machiavelli's. It is as if Guido were the spokesman for the Florentine secretary, putting his faith solely in "what works," just as Machiavelli professed to be interested only in "effective truth." Guido's condemnation undercuts the value of his advice and at the same time it seems an answer to Machiavelli. The motif of the journey gives us a place to stand from which the remarks of the damned may be judged, but there is no such place in *The Prince*. It is as if it had been written in Hell. (J.F.)

- 6–11. THE SICILIAN BULL was a torture device sculpted in metal by the craftsman Perillus for the use of Phalaris, the tyrant of Agrigentum in ancient Sicily. Victims were sealed in the hollow bull, which was heated. Perillus supposedly GAVE IT SHAPE in such a way that the cries of pain from inside would sound as if the bull were bellowing. Perillus was punished for his cruel ingenuity

- when he WAS FORCED TO GIVE IT HIS VOICE, the maker being put inside by Phalaris as the device's first victim.
19. LOMBARD would be the dialect of Latin—or Italian—spoken by Virgil as a Mantuan.
27. THE ROMAGNOLES: the inhabitants of Romagna, a region of northern Italy between the Apennines and the Adriatic, to the north and east of Florence.
- 27–28. I HAIL / FROM THE HILL COUNTRY: scholars can identify the speaker as Guido da Montefeltro, a renowned Ghibelline military leader sometimes known as THE FOX (line 74). He joined the Franciscan order in 1296, abandoning secular pursuits. But it was believed that in 1298 he told Pope Boniface VIII, THE PRINCE OF NEW PHARISEES (line 83), how the citadel of Palestrina could be taken; it is for giving this advice—obeying the devious Boniface but betraying both his vows and the Colonna family, who had taken shelter in Palestrina—that he is here among the false counselors.
- 37–39. POLENTA'S EAGLE, heraldic symbol of the Polenta family, symbolized their continuing rule over RAVENNA and the smaller city of CERVIA. Guido da Polenta the Elder was the father of Francesca da Rimini, who speaks in Canto V.
- 40–52. Dante lists several examples of the forces that keep Romagna from peace: during THE LONG SIEGE of the Ghibelline city of Forlì by French and Guelph troops, the defenders led by Guido da Montefeltro—the shade Dante the pilgrim is addressing, not identified by him at this point—STRUCK THE FRENCHMEN DOWN, defeating the attackers and inflicting heavy losses. In Dante's time, Forlì was held by the Ordelaffi family, whose heraldic emblem included a green lion, hence the GREEN PAWS. THE OLD MASTIFF AND NEW OF VERRUCCHIO are Malatesta, who captured Rimini in 1295, and his son Malatestino. Situated near the SANTERNO and LAMONE rivers, respectively, the cities of Imola and Faenza were governed by Maghinardo Pagani da Susinana, whose heraldic emblem depicted a lion on a white field. On the SAVIO River is the city of Cesena, by law a free municipality, which was dominated by Galasso da Montefeltro, cousin of Guido.
66. Guido da Montefeltro BECAME A CORDED FRIAR by joining the Franciscan order in 1296.
68. The HIGH PRIEST is Pope Boniface VIII, blamed by Montefeltro for his downfall.
- 83–89. THE PRINCE OF NEW PHARISEES is Montefeltro's scornful epithet for Boniface VIII, who made war NEARBY THE LATERAN (the papal palace), contending against his opponents the Colonna family, eventually delivered into Boniface's hands by Guido da Montefeltro's advice. Boniface is accused of pursuing personal battles instead of seemlier kinds of combat: crusading against SARACENS OR JEWS in the Holy Land, or against Christians who transgress by doing business in THE SULTAN'S DOMAIN or by betraying ACRE, the last Christian outpost in the Holy Land, conquered by the Saracens in 1291.
- 92–94. The Emperor CONSTANTINE, according to legend, was afflicted with leprosy as punishment for persecuting Christians. He sought out Pope SYLVESTER on Mount SORACTE, where he was converted, baptized, and instantly cured.

- 97–117. Boniface asks Montefeltro for a way to defeat the Colonna faction and LEVEL PALESTRINA TO THE EARTH; Montefeltro's advice is to deal falsely with the Colonnas by making promises of complete amnesty that he does not intend to keep. This policy succeeds, the Colonnas surrender, their fortress of Palestrina is destroyed, and Montefeltro's soul is consigned to the eighth circle of Hell.
- 105–6. The two KEYS are those of papal authority ("And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [Matt. 16:19]), which was given up by Boniface VIII's PREDECESSOR, Celestine V, possibly referred to as "he who made the Great Refusal" in Canto III. (See Canto XIX, lines 85–88.)
- 113–15. St. Francis comes to claim the soul of Montefeltro, who is one of his order, for Heaven; however, the soul is rightfully taken by one of the BLACK CHERUBIM OF HELL instead. By believing Boniface's spurious absolution without repenting, Montefeltro doomed himself to Hell.

CANTO XXVIII

7. APULIANS: though modern Apulia is the southeast heel of the peninsula, on the Adriatic coast, in the Middle Ages the name indicated all of southern Italy, the locale of the bloodshed listed in the following lines.
- 10–12. According to LIVY's *History*, the CARTHAGINIAN military leader Hannibal returned home with a heap of gold RINGS taken from the fingers of slain Romans, as proof of his victory over them.
14. ROBERT GUISCARD (c. 1015–1085) was a Norman warrior, Duke of Apulia and Calabria.
15. AT CEPERANO, where Apulian barons were pledged to defend the pass on behalf of Manfred, natural son of Frederick II, they instead let through the troops of Charles of Anjou, leading to the death of Manfred in 1266.
- 17–18. NEAR TAGLIACOZZO, Alardo de Valéry devised the strategy by which Charles of Anjou defeated Manfred's nephew in 1268.
30. Apparently, Dante and his contemporaries believed that MOHAMMED, the founder of Islam, was a renegade Cardinal, a belief that helps explain his presence here among the schismatics.
32. ALI was Mohammed's nephew, son-in-law, and devoted follower. His succession to the Caliphate led to a dispute that caused the schism of Islam into Sunnites and Shiites.
53. FRA DOLCINO Tornielli of Novara was a leader of the Apostolic Brothers, a reformist sect that opposed the temporal power of the clergy, advocating a return to the austerity of the original Apostles. The Apostolic Brothers were accused of heretical practices, including the communal sharing of property and of women. After taking refuge in the mountains, Fra Dolcino and his followers were besieged and starved out, then massacred; he and his alleged mistress, Margaret of Trent, were burned alive in 1307.

70. PIER DA MEDICINA (d. 1271?) is described as a sower of discord.
- 71–82. SER GUIDO AND ANGIOLELLO: around 1215, Malatestino, Lord of Rimini, the one-eyed TYRANT, invited two noblemen of FANO, Guido de Cassero and Angiolello di Carignano, to a conference at LA CATTOLICA. Malatestino's men attacked their boat and threw them overboard in the seas near the cliff of FOCARA. Drowned, they had no need to pray for fair winds off that treacherous promontory.
- 75–76. NEPTUNE is the god of the sea; CYPRUS and MAJORCA represent the east-west breadth of the Mediterranean Sea.
- 78–79. The CITY / FOUND BITTER BY ANOTHER WHO'S WITH ME HERE is Rimini, ruled by Malatestino. "Another who's with me here" refers to Caius Curio (lines 92–93 and note), who at the Rubicon, north of Rimini, gave Julius Caesar advice leading to civil war.
- 92–93. Caius CURIO was bribed by Caesar to betray Pompey and, according to Lucan, urged Caesar to cross the river Rubicon—thus entering into rebellion—when he hesitated. The Rubicon flows near Rimini, which is why the city would be a bitter sight for Curio. The line in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (I, 281) is "*semper nocuit differre paratis*": "delay always undoes those who are prepared."
- 94–100. MOSCA de' Lamberti renewed the Ghibelline feud with the Guelphs in 1215 by inciting the Amidei family to murder the Guelph Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti for breaking his engagement to one of their daughters. Later, the Lamberti family was exiled from Florence. Mosca is one of the "men of good reason" Dante asks Ciacco about in Canto VI, 70–75.
- 119–27. BERTRAN DE BORN, lord of Hautefort near Périgueux, was a soldier and troubadour poet who died in 1215 as a Cistercian monk. King Henry II of England is supposed to have believed that Bertran inspired the rebellion of the king's oldest son Prince Henry, known as the YOUNG KING.
- 123–24. The biblical King David's counselor ACHITOPHEL inspired the rebellion of ABSALOM, David's son, against his father.
127. THIS RETRIBUTION—in Italian, *contrapasso*—indicates the principle whereby the punishment in Hell is suited to each kind of sin, often by extending or distilling or literally reenacting the sin itself. The Italian word derives from *contrapassum*, the medieval Latin word used by translators of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and by Thomas Aquinas and others in commenting upon Aristotle.
- In keeping with *contrapasso*, fomenters of schism are cut apart. Other examples include gluttons chewed by Cerberus, spendthrifts scattered in the wood, the lustful buffeted about in a wind, and murderers boiled in blood.

CANTO XXIX

- 10–11. THE MOON is below the travelers' feet on the other side of the globe because it is day in the inhabited hemisphere of land: the sun is over their heads. It is now early afternoon.
- 28–38. GERI DEL BELLO degli Alighieri was Dante's father's first cousin. He had

a reputation as a troublemaker who set people against one another for sport; that is why Dante expected to see him among the schismatics in the ninth pouch. Commentators disagree about the details of Geri's life and especially his death; however, it seems likely that he met HIS VIOLENT DEATH at the hands of a member of the Sacchetti family, with whom the Alighieri feuded until 1342. In 1300, Geri's death was still unavenged, but one of the Sacchetti was murdered by Geri's nephews in 1310 in an apparent act of retaliation. This type of family vengeance was permitted by law.

- 29–30. THE ONE / WHO ONCE HELD ALTAFORTE is Bertran de Born (see Canto XXVIII, lines 119–27); Altaforte was his castle.
- 49–52. In Dante's time, the valley along the Chiana River (VAL DI CHIANA) was plagued by malaria, as were the wild Tuscan MAREMMA and the island of SARDINIA. The disease was at its peak in the summertime.
- 64–69. AEGINA was a beautiful nymph loved by Jupiter, who carried her off to an island where she bore the god a son. This son, Aeacus, renamed the island after his mother; it is to the island that Dante refers in line 64. Jupiter's jealous wife, Juno, struck the island with a pestilence that killed all who lived there except Aeacus. The lonely survivor begged Jupiter to intervene, and the god turned all the ANTS on the island into people: thus THE ANCIENT POPULACE WAS RESTORED. Ovid tells the story in his *Metamorphoses* (VII, 523–660).
- 116–28. The speaker is not named, but early commentators agree that he is the alchemist Griffolino, about whom little is known beyond the story he relates in this canto. ALBERO OF SIENA, whom Griffolino duped, was the son (or perhaps only the favorite) of the Bishop of Siena—the ONE in line 125—who subsequently had Griffolino burned at the stake for heresy. It is for the practice of ALCHEMY, however, and not THAT WHICH [he] DIED FOR—heresy—that Griffolino is punished among the falsifiers in THIS LAST DITCH OF TEN in Malebolge. DAEDALUS (line 123) was the inventor who escaped Crete on wings of wax and feathers. (See Canto XVII, lines 99–101 and note.)
128. MINOS is the demon who assigns sinners to the appropriate circles of Hell by wrapping his tail around himself. See Canto V, lines 3–11 and note.
- 134–41. STRICCA, NICCOLÒ, CACCIA D'ASCIANO, and MUDDLEHEAD (Bartolommeo de' Folcacchieri) are the names of thirteenth-century Siennese squanderers. Along with Arcolano da Squarcia (punished in Canto XIII: see lines 108–22 and note), they belonged to the notorious Spendthrift Club, the COSTLY CULT OF CLOVES whose purpose was the profligate spending of fortunes.
- 146–47. CAPOCCHIO was probably Florentine, though in some reports he is Siennese. Famous for his skill as an alchemist and a mimic—a falsifier of both metals and gestures—he was burned alive in 1293.

CANTO XXX

- 1–11. Ovid tells (*Metamorphoses*, III, 259–309) of how Jupiter's wife, JUNO, was jealous of her husband's infatuation for the THEBAN beauty SEMELE. Juno destroyed Semele, and then took vengeance on other Thebans as well, including Semele's sister Ino, the WIFE OF ATHAMAS. Juno caused Athamas to become

- mad, whereupon he mistook Ino and her sons for a LIONESS and two CUBS (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 512–30).
- 12–19. When Priam, the KING of Troy, had been defeated and killed, his wife, HECUBA, was made to witness the sacrifice of their daughter POLYXENA. Their son POLYDORUS was murdered by his uncle, Polymestor the King of Thrace; the corpse of Polydorus was set adrift. Hecuba, mad with grief, BEGAN BARKING LIKE A DOG and in that form, having taken violent revenge on Polymestor, threw herself into the sea. This story, too, comes from Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, XIII, 404–575).
28. THE SPIRIT FROM AREZZO is Griffolino: see Canto XXIX, lines 116–28 and note.
30. GIANNI SCHICCHI falsified his identity: see lines 39–44 and note.
- 36–39. The princess MYRRHA, driven by incestuous passion, disguised herself as another woman and seduced her father, the King of Cyprus.
- 39–44. Gianni SCHICCHI was a Florentine who died in 1280. Early sources say that he was a skillful mimic and used this talent to impersonate the dying BUOSO DONATI, a wealthy man whose nephew Simone colluded in the fraud. Posing as Donati, Schicchi dictated a false will naming Simone as the main beneficiary. Dante follows the version of the story in which Schicchi includes for himself the bequest of Donati's best mule, THE FINEST LADY OF THE HERD.
53. The HECTIC is one suffering from fever.
- 58–89. MASTER ADAM was encouraged by the Conti Guidi of ROMENA—GUIDO, ALESSANDRO, and their unnamed brother—to make counterfeit replicas of the gold coins of Florence. The false coins were stamped, like the real ones, with John THE BAPTIST'S FACE (line 71), but were made of twenty-one rather than twenty-four carats of gold, and THREE CARATS OF DROSS (line 89). When the fraud was discovered, the Florentines were outraged, and in 1281 they burned Master Adam alive to punish him. The best-known FONTE BRANDA (line 77) is a fountain in Siena, but Master Adam may be referring instead to a smaller spring of the same name near Romena. Of the brothers Master Adam so despises, only Guido was already dead in 1300, so he must be the ONE . . . ALREADY INSIDE (line 77).
- 96–97. In Genesis 39:7–20, Potiphar's wife is the FALSE ONE who accuses JOSEPH of trying to rape her after he refuses her advances.
98. SINON convinced the Trojans that he had abandoned the Greeks and wanted to defect to the other side. He came bearing the gift of the wooden horse that was to be Troy's downfall.
129. NARCISSUS'S LOOKING GLASS is water: Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in a pond (the story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, III, 407–512).

CANTO XXXI

- 3–4. The legend that says ACHILLES' LANCE could heal the wounds it caused is told by Homer (*Iliad*, XVI, 143–44), Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, XIII, 172), and others.

- 14–17. The Old French epic *Le Chanson de Roland*, composed around 1200, tells of the defeat of the rear guard of the Frankish emperor CHARLEMAGNE (742–814) at Roncesvalles during the crusade against the Spanish Saracens. The doomed paladin ROLAND blew a signal on his battle HORN too late to save himself, but his uncle Charlemagne heard the blast eight miles away.
36. MONTEREGGIONE is a fortified castle near Siena.
- 40–41. JOVE is still angry with the giants he defeated with thunderbolts in the battle of Phlegra (see Canto XIV, lines 46–48 and note).
56. The enormous PINECONE is more than twelve feet high. It now stands in the gardens of the Vatican.
60. People from FRIESLAND were supposed to be unusually tall.
64. The giant's words are apparently meaningless. Though many scholars have attempted translations or interpretations, Dante has Virgil say of Nimrod's language that NO ONE FATHOMS IT (line 77).
- 72–74. Although the Bible does not say who ordered the construction of the Tower of Babel, it was traditional in the Middle Ages to ascribe the ill-fated project to King NIMROD of Babylon. God became angry at the builders' ambition—the tower was to reach all the way to Heaven—and He caused the confusion of languages among the workers to prevent them from finishing. The story is from Genesis 11; Nimrod is named separately, in Genesis 10:8–9. Nimrod is not described in Genesis as a giant, though Dante was not the first medieval author to make him one. The Bible does call him a hunter (Gen. 10:9), which may be why he appears here with a horn.
- 87–91. Homer tells of how the Titan EPHEALTES and his brother Otus died attacking the gods on Olympus. Both brothers appear in Virgil's version of Hell (*Aeneid*, VI, 582).
95. BRIAREUS—also known as Aegaeon—was another of the giants who attacked Olympus. Dante does not follow Virgil's description (*Aeneid*, X, 565–68), in which Briareus has fifty heads and a hundred arms.
- 96–97. Legend says the Libyan giant ANTAEUS was invincible as long as he was touching his mother, Earth, with some part of his body. The hero Hercules killed Antaeus in a wrestling match by lifting him off the ground and crushing him while holding him aloft. Antaeus may be UNCHAINED because he was not among the giants who attacked the gods.
- 110–14. The Roman general SCIPIO defeated HANNIBAL and his Carthaginian troops in the FATEFUL VALLEY of the Bagradas River near Zama in Tunisia in 202 B.C. In Lucan (*Pharsalia*, IV, 601–2), Antaeus is said to feed on lions.
119. Antaeus will set the travelers down in the ninth and last circle of Hell, by the frozen lake COCYTUS.
121. TYPHON and TITYUS are also giants, both unfriendly to the Olympian gods.
133. The LEANING TOWER OF GARISENDA is in Bologna. The passing cloud makes the tower appear to be falling toward the viewer.

CANTO XXXII

2. The MELANCHOLY HOLE, the pit of Hell whose floor is the frozen lake Cocytus, houses the worst sinners in Dante's universe: those guilty of treacherous fraud.
- 10-11. The MUSES made the music of AMPHION's lyre so beautiful that it charmed the stones down from the hills and made them stack themselves up to form the walls of THEBES.
- 27-28. TAMBERNIC (Italian *Tambernicchi*) has not been specifically identified by scholars, but presumably it is a mountain like PIETRAPANA, in the Apuan Alps.
- 51-54. The spirits are Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti, who killed each other around 1285 in a fight over the inheritance from their father, ALBERT, Count of Mangona. The family had a castle on the BISENZIO River, not far from Florence.
56. CAINA is the outermost part of Cocytus; in it are punished those who betrayed members of their own families. The place is named for Cain, who murdered his brother Abel in the world's first such betrayal (Gen. 4:8) (see Canto V, line 96 and note).
- 58-59. King ARTHUR ran his treacherous nephew Mordred through with a blow so violent that daylight shone through the wound, according to the French romance *Lancelot du Lac*.
- 59-60. FOCACCIA was the nickname of Vanni de' Cancellieri of Pistoia. He murdered his cousin in 1293.
62. SASSOL MASCHERONI is known to have murdered a relative; accounts differ as to whether it was a brother, a nephew, a cousin, or an uncle.
- 65-66. CAMISCION DE' PAZZI murdered a kinsman named Ubertino; little else is known about him. His relative CARLINO de' Pazzi was to betray his party, the White Guelphs, in 1302 by letting their enemies into the castle he was holding for them. Camiscion (like many of the souls in Hell, he can foresee "future" crimes) expects that for his more heinous misdeed, Carlino will be punished in the second realm of Cocytus, and that the gravity of Carlino's sin will make Camiscion's own SEEM LESS.
78. MONTAPERTI is the Tuscan village where the Ghibellines soundly defeated the Florentine Guelphs in 1260 (see Canto X, lines 29-48 and notes; line 80 and note).
87. ANTENORA is the second part of Cocytus. Punished there are the souls of those who betrayed their country or their political party. It is named for the Trojan Antenor, who according to medieval tradition betrayed Troy to the Greeks.
105. BOCCA degli Abati, a Florentine Guelph, is sometimes held to blame for his party's defeat at the hands of the Ghibellines at Montaperti in 1260. In the heat of battle, it is said, the traitor cut off the hand of the Guelphs' standard-bearer, throwing his party's troops into confusion.
- 114-18. BUOSA da DUERA, a Ghibelline, took a bribe from the Frenchman Charles of Anjou in return for the French troops' free passage through Lombardy and Parma to Naples in 1265. In so doing, Buosa betrayed King Manfred of Naples.

- 119–20. Tesauro de' BECCHERIA, Pope Alexander IV's legate in Tuscany, was beheaded in Florence in 1258 for plotting with the then-exiled Ghibellines to overthrow the Guelphs.
122. GIANNI DE' SOLDANIERI betrayed his Ghibelline party, going over to the side of the rebels during an uprising against the Ghibellines in 1266. GANELON is the treacherous adviser who purposely sends Charlemagne's rear guard to their deaths in the *Chanson de Roland* (see Canto XXXI, lines 14–17 and note).
- 123–24. In 1280, the Ghibelline TEBALDELLO of the Zambrasi family betrayed his party, opening the gates of the city of FAENZA to the invading Guelphs.
- 130–31. TYDEUS, one of the seven kings who laid siege to Thebes (see Canto XIV, lines 38–59 and note), was mortally wounded in that battle by MENALIPPUS. Before dying, he managed to kill Menalippus and, enraged, gnaw at his enemy's skull and brains.

CANTO XXXIII

The moral poles of Dante's universe are occupied by children. Their suffering is the theme of the cantos of Ugolino, just as their joy is the theme of Canto XXXII of the *Paradiso*. The guilt of Ugolino scarcely seems relevant compared to the pain of his death and his condemnation, yet he seems to be unaware of the Christological significance of the children's suffering and his own. As they die, they echo the words first of Job—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away"—and then of the Saviour on the Cross—"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ugolino's response is simply to repress his own grief for fear of increasing theirs.

The children's apparently naïve offer of their flesh to their father echoes Jesus' offer to the disciples in John 6: "Whoso eateth my flesh . . . hath eternal life." The disciples are scandalized by the offer, as have been Christians ever since. In his commentary on the Gospel, Augustine points out that Jesus is offering his *living* flesh, which is to say, his Word. Those who do not understand this Eucharistic offer think of his flesh as though it were meat. So here, the children offer their father their redemptive sacrifice, much as Isaac naïvely offered himself to Abraham. Because Ugolino does not understand, there is no redemption.

In the Old Testament, Israel was founded when God intervened in Abraham's sacrifice and the covenant was established between fathers and sons. The covenant came to be symbolized by the circumcision. This is the opposite of the Theban story of Oedipus and his father, in which the survival of the son depends upon the death of the father. The story of Ugolino is filled with Abrahamic promise, but ends in Theban tragedy when Ugolino, like Saturn, devours his children's flesh in order to survive, however briefly. Dante refers to Pisa as a new Thebes. In human society, there is no middle ground between Communion and cannibalism.

Ugolino is a literalist who cannot see the symbolism in his dream or in his children's offer. Christ's offer in the Gospel was allegorical, offering the living Word. This is the spiritual sense of the children's words. But Ugolino reads only death in his dream and only cannibalism in their words. In fact, his dream prefigures the infernal punishment, as he gnaws the enemy who gnawed him, and his children's words have

biblical resonance. Nevertheless he takes their offer at face value and, when he is reduced to animality, finally accepts it, biting the flesh of his children in hunger as he had once bitten his hand in grief. (J.F.)

12–72. UGOLINO della Gherardesca was a Pisan nobleman deeply involved in power struggles and political intrigue. He was exiled from Pisa in 1275, when the Ghibelline leadership of the city decided he had been conspiring with Guelphs. He had returned both to Pisa and to political power by 1284: the Guelphs helped him become reinstated, whereupon he betrayed that party and allied himself again with the Ghibellines. As chief magistrate for the city, he yielded three Ghibelline-controlled castles to the enemy, supposedly to protect Pisa—but the act was viewed by some as treacherous.

Later, in 1288, Ugolino conspired with ARCHBISHOP RUGGIERI and several prominent Ghibelline families (the GUALANDI, SISMONDI, and LANFRANCHI among them) to oust from Pisan politics Ugolino's grandson and rival, Nino Visconti (Nino fled to Florence and became a friend to Dante). The archbishop then betrayed Ugolino in turn, using the matter of the three castles as an excuse for imprisoning him with his two young sons and two grandsons in a tower and eventually starving them to death.

77. In Italian *si* is the word for “yes.” In another work, the *De vulgare eloquentia*, a treatise on language and style, Dante distinguishes languages by the way they say “yes.”

78–80. The islands of GORGONA and CAPRAIA sit in the Mediterranean not far from the mouth of the river ARNO. In Dante's time, they were possessions of Pisa.

84. Ugolino compares Pisa to the Greek city of THEBES, where so much fury and bloodshed occurs in the ancient myths.

87–89. In these lines, Dante and Virgil cross into Ptolomea (named in line 119), the third region of Cocytus, where those who betrayed their guests are punished. It appears to be named for Ptolemy of Jericho, who murders his banquet guests in the First Book of Maccabees (16:15–17) in the Catholic Bible—although Ptolemy XII of Egypt, who murdered Pompey, has also been suggested as the source of the name.

113–15. FRA ALBERIGO of Faenza was a Jovial Friar (see Canto XXIII, note to line 98). He had a kinsman named Manfred and Manfred's son murdered during a banquet at his home; the signal to his assassins was the phrase “Bring the fruit.”

119. For comments about PTOLOMEA, see the note to lines 87–89.

121. In classical myths, ATROPOS is the last of the three Fates: she cuts the thread of a mortal's life when the time comes for the body to die and the soul to be SENT FORTH into the afterlife.

132. BRANCA D'ORIA—aided by the anonymous KINSMAN mentioned in lines 142–43—murdered his father-in-law, Michel Zanche, who was a guest in his home, in either 1275 or 1290 (depending on which scholar is consulted). Michel Zanche is one of the barrators in the fifth pouch of Malebolge: see Canto XXII, line 84 and note.

134–35. Branca d’Oria lived until about 1325.

148–53. ROMAGNA’S WORST SPIRIT is Fra Alberigo. The GENOESE Dante FOUND with him is Branca d’Oria.

CANTO XXXIV

- 1–2. Virgil’s words, Latin for “The banners of the king of Hell advance,” are a twisted echo of the first line of a well-known sixth-century Latin hymn sung during Holy Week, which begins “The banners of the King advance.”
- 13–14. This is Judecca, the final division of Cocytus and the innermost part of Hell. In Judecca (which will be named in line 118), the worst sinners of all—those who betrayed their benefactors—are punished. The region is named for Judas Iscariot (see line 62 and note).
21. The CREATURE is Satan, whom Dante also calls by the names Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Dis. He was an angel of enormous BEAUTY before he rebelled against God and was cast down from Heaven.
62. Jesus’ apostle JUDAS ISCARIOT betrayed his Master: this is the worst sin.
- 65–66. In 44 B.C., Marcus Junius BRUTUS and Gaius CASSIUS Longus conspired to kill Julius Caesar. Their crime was seen in the Middle Ages as an offense not only to the murderers’ great benefactor, but to the progress and history of the Roman Empire and the Church.
- 69–90. Dante and Virgil climb first down Lucifer’s body as far as THE PIVOT OF THE THIGHS: this midpoint of Satan’s anatomy is exactly at the center of the earth. From there, in order to advance, the travelers must move *up* Satan’s legs, toward the surface of the hemisphere opposite the one they have just come through. At the center, Virgil turns his body around 180 degrees and climbs headfirst into the southern hemisphere. Dante, not realizing WHAT POINT [he] HAD PASSED, becomes disoriented.
- 90–93. THE SUN IS AT MID-TIERCE at about 7:30 a.m.—fully twelve hours earlier than in line 67, when Virgil told Dante night was coming. The time changed when the wayfarers switched hemispheres; here in the southern half of the globe it is still the morning of Holy Saturday, April 9, 1300. To say that THE WAY / IS LONG ahead is a bit of an understatement: Virgil and Dante must climb halfway through the earth—as far again as they have come already—to reach the surface of the southern hemisphere. The journey will take them about twenty-four hours in all—the same amount of time as the trip through Hell.
- 111–18. In Dante’s vision of the world, the northern HEMISPHERE contains almost all of earth’s GREAT DRY LAND, with Jerusalem—THE SITE / WHEREON THE MAN [Jesus] WAS SLAIN—at its exact center, UNDER THE ZENITH.
- 122–28. Dante invented the notion that Satan, falling, struck the southern hemisphere at a point directly opposite Jerusalem. All the land in that half of the world, he says, fled from the impact and ISSUED FORTH in the northern hemisphere: that is why the southern hemisphere is almost entirely water. The one body of land that NOW APPEARS ON THIS SIDE will turn out in the *Purgatorio* to be the island of Mount Purgatory, where Dante must begin the next great

leg of his journey. It is located exactly in the center of the southern hemisphere, opposite Jerusalem in the northern hemisphere. The land which forms the island is that part of the inner earth which, displaced by the falling Lucifer, FLED ITS BERTH and rose to the surface. The hollow passage to the surface, at whose bottom the travelers now stand, is the CAVITY that the dislodged earth left behind.

131. This RUNNEL may have as its source the river Lethe, flowing down from Purgatory—but Dante does not say so.
140. Dante's *Purgatorio* and his *Paradiso*, like the *Inferno*, end with the word STARS.

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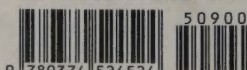
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